MEDITATIONS
UPON OUR
SAVIOUR'S
PARABLE
OF THE
Prodigal Son.

BEING

Several SERMONS on the fifteenth Chapter of St. *Luke*'s Gospel.

By *OBADIAH GREW* D. D.
late Minister of the Gospel in *Coventry*.

PART I.

LONDON,
Printed by *S. Roycroft* for *Nevill Simmons* at the Prince's Arms in St. *Paul*'s Church-yard. 1678.

Imprimatur,

Aug. 15. 1677. *GUIL. SILL.*

THE

PREFACE.

NO Man, I think, who ſhall conſider the Allegorical Comments which ſome, eſpecially of the Fathers, have given us upon ſeveral Parts of Scripture, and even St. Paul himſelf, and our Saviour alſo upon divers of his own Parables, but will ſay, I have been modeſt in the Doctrinal Inferences made from the Parable here before us.

It cannot be denied, but that as a

wiſe man may have more Reaſons than One for what he ſaith, ſo may he deſign to teach more than one thing, or ſort of perſons thereby: How much more reaſonable is it then, that we allow the ſame to that infinite Wiſdome, by which our Bleſſed Saviour always ſpake? Not only directing his Words to the Generation then in being, but alſo inſpiring his Apoſtles to tranſmit them in writing to all Poſterity. So that as they had their Leſſons to learn then, ſo have we ours now, from the ſelf ſame words, ſo far as our Caſe may any way bear a proportion unto theirs. For it is not intelligible, to what end they ſhould be left us in writing, if we were not concerned to learn ſomething of Importance from them, as well as they.

Some-

Something, I ſay, and that from every Word or Clauſe, ſo far, as without any vain and affected ſtraining may be ſoberly inferr'd, and the truth thereof confirm'd by other parts of Scripture. For it were highly diſhonourable to our Saviour, to think, That he, who was ſo much againſt Battologies *in his Diſciples, ſhould himſelf have the Vanity, or be forced, for want of skill, to uſe any words only to fill up Vacuities in his Diſcourſe. So that, although nothing ſhould be ſtrained, yet is there not a Clauſe in this whole Parable, which affords not ſome particular and important Inſtruction. Otherwiſe our Saviour could very eaſily, and would much rather have left it out.*

From the conſideration of what hath been ſaid, it ſeemeth plain, That this

firſt

first part of the Parable of the Prodigal pointeth not only to the Scribes and Phariſees, but to every unconverted man, whoſe Nature and Condition are herein clearly and fully repreſented; as one that is wilfull and heady, blind and deſperately bent upon his Luſts, againſt the will of God, to the wounding, and greateſt danger of undoing his own Soul. In a word, ſhewing him to be nothing elſe but Decalogus inverſus, *the Ten Commandments turned upſide down. The deformity of fall'n Man being greater than even that of* Nebuchadnezzar, *when from a mighty Monarch, he fell into a kind of Brutality, and was turned out to graze with the Beaſts of the field. What ſaith the Spirit of God himſelf?* Pſal. 49.20. Man that is in honour, and underſtandeth not, is like the Beaſts that periſh. *Nor*

Nor doth this Character belong only to the Vicious and Debauched, but unto the Wiſeſt and moſt Civilliz'd of Men, who do not what they do in a ſound Faith of God Almighty's Word, a ſincere Obedience to his Law, in dependance upon the help of his Holy Spirit, out of Love and Deſign for his Glory, and that through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt they may be happy in the enjoyment of him in the end. Far greater Things than the moſt accompliſhed Morality (as we take the word from the Latines, and they their Notions hereof from the Greeks) could ever pretend unto. So far, that I ſhall not do ſo great a diſhonour to the Chriſtian Religion, as to make it a Queſtion, by going about to prove it.

That wiſe man Cato, *who was called*

Homo

Homo Virtuti ſimillimus, *the very Picture of Virtue; yet (in the fourth Book of his Morals) ſcoffed at God's Inſtitutions in the Ceremonial Law, which prefigured the death of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt for loſt Sinners.*

Stultitia eſt, morte alterius ſperare ſalutem.

And Plato, *though ſtyled* Divine, *yet did rather dream of God than know him diſtinctly, as was the judgment of* Lactantius *concerning him*; Lib. de vanitate Philoſophiæ & Philoſophorum.

But however it may be to us a ſecret, what God, the Sovereign Lord of all, may do with any perſons from amongſt the Jews, and before the Goſpel; yet as for thoſe to whom it hath been preach-

preached, we are ſure, That without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God: *And,* that he that believeth not, *ſo doth not all thoſe things that are the demonſtrations of a Goſpel Faith,* ſhall be damned.

Let me therefore conclude with this Exhortation to every Reader: Firſt try your ſelf by this Standard, whether you are weight, by the Character here before you, whether you be included in it, and that it expreſſeth your own heart, yea or no. If it doth, then be afraid of your ſelf, and tremble at the Condition you are in. If it doth not, then have compaſſion on thoſe whom it doth include: And to Compaſſion add, you cannot chooſe but add, your Prayers; and to both your beſt and prudent endeavours to reclaim them; remembring, amongſt many other encouragements,

ments, that great one which the Apoſtle James *mentions, viz.* That he who converts a ſinner from the errour of his way, ſhall ſave a Soul, and hide a a multitude of ſins. *And that this may be the bleſſed fruit, as of the enſuing Treatiſe, ſo of all other means to be uſed in order thereunto, is the moſt affectionate Prayer of the Authour*

O. G.

THE

THE CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

Sheweth the Nature and Use of Parables; the Occasion of this following Parable; the different and further import hereof, above that of the two former; and its division into three general parts. p. 1.

CHAP. II.

Giveth the general Doctrine of the whole Parable; illustrating God's gracious Reception of returning Sinners, in several particulars. 9

CHAP. III.

Giveth the Reasons of the Doctrine in the foregoing Chapter, and the Demonstrations of its unquestionable Truth. 23

CHAP. IV.

Maketh Application of the foregoing Doctrine in two uses. 33

CHAP. V.

Proceedeth to the two general Doctrines resulting from the first part of the Parable; particularly shewing the natural and lusting desire that is in

man to forsake God; and the Reasons hereof. 42

CHAP. VI.

Maketh Application of the foregoing Doctrine in several Uses. 59

CHAP. VII.

Wherein follows the second general Doctrine resulting from the first part of the Parable; shewing both the sinful and miserable consequences of mens forsaking of God. The gross mistake of most men herein; and the means to be used for prevention. 70

CHAP. VIII.

Sheweth, That God gives to every man a Portion to be improved: together with the Reasons for his so doing; from that particular Clause of the 12th Verse, And he divided unto them his Living. 85

CHAP. IX.

Maketh Application of the foregoing Doctrine; in shewing how much it concerns every man to improve his Portion from God; and in giving Directions for the doing of it. 95

CHAP. X.

Representeth how quickly man forsakes God, when God leaves him to himself; with the Reasons whence it comes to pass; and the Uses we are to make hereof; from the first Clause of the 13th Verse, And not many days after, &c. 104

CHAP. XI.

Sheweth the worldliness of man's heart by nature; from the next Clause of the 13th Verse, The younger Son gathered all together. 113

CHAP. XII.

Sheweth how inclinable man is by nature to go farther and farther from God; from the following Clause

Clauſe of the ſame Verſe, And took his journey into a far Countrey. 117

CHAP. XIII.

Repreſenteth, how natural men are driven further from God by all the good he doth for them; whence it is thus; and what Uſes are to be made hereof; from the ſame Clauſe. 125

CHAP. XIV.

Sheweth, how unſerviceable every man, in his natural eſtate, is to God; from the laſt Clauſe of the 13th Verſe, And there waſted his Subſtance with riotous living. 133

CHAP. XV.

Sheweth, That a natural man is an unprofitable Creature to himſelf. The ſeveral Uſes that are to be made hereof: And how the ſins of ſelf-will and ſelf-ſeeking, the great Cauſes hereof, may be known; from the ſame Clauſe. 139

CHAP. XVI.

Sheweth, That when men forſake God, he gives them up to the height of ſinning; from the ſame Clauſe. 159

CHAP. XVII.

In which is ſhewed, That great pain and ſorrow do always follow the pleaſures of ſin; with Meditations hereupon by way of Uſe; from the 14th Verſe, And when he had ſpent all, there aroſe a mighty famine in that Land, and he began to be in want. 154

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

Manifesteth, That whenever men set their hearts upon the things of this world, God makes them all empty and unsatisfactory to them: The several ways God takes to bring this to pass; and what use we are to make hereof; from the same 14th Verse. 167

CHAP. XIX.

Sheweth, That troubles of Conscience are God's preparative to a sinner's Conversion; and the Reasons hereof. How God sometimes varies his method; and to what end. What degree of sorrow requisite; with the Application of the whole; from the last Clause of the 14th Verse, And he began to be in want. 177

CHAP. XX.

Representeth, How much it is in the nature of man, when convicted of sin, to have recourse to any thing, though never so vain, for ease, rather than unto God. Several Reasons or Causes from whence this comes to pass. The Application informing us, That Conviction is but a partial Conversion; and of what nature are all false Refuges: with divers considerations moving us to beware of them; from the first Clause of the 15th Verse, And he went and joyned himself to a Citizen of that Countrey. 187

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

Sets forth the power that Satan hath over men in their natural eſtate. Together with a threefold Uſe to be made hereof; from the ſame Clauſe of the 15 Verſe. 204

CHAP. XXII.

Sheweth, what care natural men take in making proviſion for the luſts of the fleſh; with the Application; from the laſt Clauſe of the 15 Verſe, And he ſent him into his fields to feed Swine. 214

CHAP. XXIII.

In which is ſhewed, That the things of this world, which natural mens hearts, for the ſatisfaction of their luſts, would feed upon, are, in the judgment of our Saviour Chriſt, no better than Swines meat. In what reſpect they are ſo, exemplified in two particulars; from the firſt part of the 16th Verſe, And he would fain have filled his belly with the Husks which the Swine did eat. 221

CHAP. XXIV.

Maketh Application of the foregoing Doctrine, in four Uſes. 230

CHAP. XXV.

Sheweth, The Property of Natural men, in chuſing

ſing to ſit down with any baſe things in the world for eaſe, rather than they will go to God for it; from the ſame Clauſe of the 16th Verſe. . . . 235

CHAP. XXVI.

In which is obſerved, That when God hath a purpoſe to convert a Sinner, he ſuffers nothing to yield relief and comfort but himſelf: with the Reaſons wherefore he doth thus; and the Uſe we are to make hereof; from the latter Clauſe of the 16th Verſe, And no man gave unto him. 240

CHAP. XXVII.

Sheweth, That the loweſt ſtep of a Sinner's miſery is, to ſee himſelf remedileſs by any carnal means whatſoever: Together with the Application hereof; from the whole ſixteenth Verſe. 249

Meditations

Meditations upon the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

CHAP. I.

Sheweth the nature and use of Parables: The occasion of this following Parable: The different and further Import hereof, above that of the two former: And its division into three general Parts.

LUKE XV. 11, 12, 13. &c.

And he said, A certain man had two Sons: And the younger of them said to his Father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger Son gathered all together, and took his journey into a farr Country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living, &c.

THIS is one of the three remarkable Parables spoken by our blessed Saviour in this Chapter, the lost Sheep, the lost piece of Silver, and the lost Son, all three having one and the same Scope, *viz.* To shew the care of God in seeking

ing loſt Sinners, and the comfort he takes in finding them; or his great readineſs to receive a returning Sinner.

Now the reaſon why Chriſt uſed Parables ſo much in his preaching, was in general, That the Scripture might be fulfilled: *All theſe things ſpake Jeſus unto the Multitude in Parables, and without a Parable ſpake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken by the Prophet, ſaying, I will open my mouth in Parables, I will utter things which have been kept ſecret from the foundation of the world*, Matth. 13. 34, 35. And more particularly he did it in mercy to ſome; *Mark* 4. 33. *And with many ſuch Parables ſpake he the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it.* And to others in Judgment; *Luke* 8. 10. *---but to others in Parables; that ſeeing, they might not ſee; and hearing, they might not underſtand.* For Parables are ſometimes called in Scripture *Dark ſayings; I will incline mine ear to a Parable, I will open my dark ſaying upon the Harp*, Pſal. 49. 4. So ſaid the Diſciples of them, *John* 16. 29. *Now ſpeakeſt thou plainly, and ſpeakeſt no Proverb, or Parable.* A Parable is like a Candle in a dark Lanthorn, there is light within, but darkneſs without. Indeed Parables are the extracts and ſpirits of Wiſdom, and have uſually come from the mouths of Rulers, or other wiſe men: Solomon *ſpake three thouſand* Parables, or *Proverbs*. Nor is *a Parable becoming the mouth of a Fool*, *Prov.* 26. 7.

Pſal. 78. 2.

Pſal. 78. 2.

1 Kings 4. 32.

Therefore the Hebrew *Maſhal*, which ſignifieth to ſpeak Parabolically, ſignifies alſo to bear Rule or Dominion: For Parables have influence upon all the Faculties of man, upon the Underſtanding, *Joh.* 3. 12.

3. 12. They help the Memory, as a Thread keeps together loose Beads. They quicken the Affections: *Where had this man this wisdom?* said they of Jesus, when he had spoken so many Parables: and *they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.* Yea, Parables have power on the Conscience; so had *Nathan*'s on *David*'s, 2 *Sam.* 12. Matth. 13. 54. Luke 4. 22.

Yet I must commend this Rule to you in all Parables; you must not be over-curious to set in a frame, as it were, every thing or word in a Parable, lest you spoil the Analogy. For in Parables some Phrases are used for the decorum of them, as fitting Colours in a Mapp or Picture, that are not of the Essence of it, but for Ornament. And this we see in Christ's expounding of his own Parables; in doing which he gives only the scope and main drift of them: which, if well considered, might have saved the Schoolmen the labour of their vain Curiosities and Disputes about them. In a word, Parables are Similitudes fetched from Earthly things which are in common use, to help the Understanding in Spiriritual and Heavenly things. So to parabolize in the Hebrew and Greek, signifies to liken or compare.

Now for the occasion of this and the other two Parables in this Chapter, we have it in the beginning of it; *There drew near unto him all the Publicans and Scribes to hear him:* And the Scribes and Pharisees murmured, saying, *This man receiveth sinners, &c.* Whereupon he spake this Parable to them, saying, *What man of you having one hundred Sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the Wilderness, and go after*

that which is loſt, till he find it? and when he hath found it, he lays it on his ſhoulders rejoycing. Here our Lord Jeſus ſhews theſe men their Errour, in thei repining at his converſing with thoſe Heathen men, by ſhewing God's care and readineſs for, and his delight in the converſion of loſt ſinners. And Chriſt enlarges himſelf on this Subject by three Parables. And why ſo many to the ſame purpoſe? Surely to convince the murmuring Scribes and Phariſees, and to encourage the poor Publicans and Sinners that were now in the way of Converſion.

Yet there is one thing of obſervation as to theſe three Parables, and that is the difference that ſeems to be in this laſt of the loſt Son, and thoſe of the loſt Sheep and loſt piece of Silver. The loſt Sheep is ſought for by the Shepheard, and the loſt piece of Silver is ſought by the Woman; but the loſt Son ſeems to ſeek his Father: and ſo it may ſeem to ſhew, How a loſt Sinner firſt ſeeketh God, and is firſt in motion to Converſion.

But no ſuch matter, nor is it here meant. In the two firſt Parables the contrary is plain, That God is firſt in ſeeking loſt Sinners: As in the Prophet, *I am ſought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that ſought me not.* Isa.65.2. The words ſound ſomewhat harſh for want of the word [now], which muſt be underſtood, I am now found of them that ſought me not----I am now ſought of them that asked not for me. The Apoſtle quoting this place of the Prophet ſaith thus, *I was found of them that ſought me not: I was made manifeſt to them that asked not after me.* Rom.10.2. The expreſſions are like thoſe in *Iſaiah, Before they call, I will anſwer.* Isa.65.24. Both hold out the preventive Mercy and Grace of God;

God; he is first in the Call and Conversion of Sinners. The Jews were *in their blood*, when the Lord called them, *Ezek.* 16. and the Gentiles doting upon Idols. *Jerusalem was a City sought out, Isa.* 62.12. and Christ was the Seeker; *The Son of man is come to seek, and to save that which was lost.* Luke 19. 10. Yea, God and Christ, Father and Son, seek and beseech the Sinner; *As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* 2 Cor. 5. 2.

Where is that converted Sinner, that can or dare say, that he was before God in the work? *When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live.* Ezek. 16. 6. As the Eye-lids in the Looking-glass move not, but as the Eyes that look into the Glass move: so is it in a Sinner's Conversion to God; God is the first mover and the first worker; the Sinner's Motion is but the reflection of Gods. Who did strike the first stroke in *Paul's* Conversion? He that struck him to the Earth, which was the Lord. Acts 9. *Lazarus* rose up, and came forth of the Grave, but it was at Christ's loud Call; that is, by his Power. John 11.

As therefore the two former Parables in their phrases shew, That God first seeks a lost Sinner; so this third, of the lost Son, imports, That a Sinner must seek God; he must seek, though he be not first in seeking: *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, Isa.* 55. 6, 7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.* There are some things for a man to do about his Conversion, but nothing in it; that is God's work.

Yet

Note. Yet man hath ever made a great ſtrife and controverſie between his Will and God's. This was the reaſon of the fall of man: and ever ſince there hath been overmuch aſcribed to the power of man's Will; as though little of it were loſt by the fall. This hath been the pride of ſome men in moſt Ages, ſuppoſing man's Will to have loſt little of its ſtrength; as *Sampſon* thought, when he wakened after his Locks were cut off; *I will go out as at other times before*; not knowing that his ſtrength was departed. But God hath ſtill kept up Inſtruments, to lay down theſe Mole-hills; not wronging Nature, but righting Grace; and cauſing men to cry Grace, Grace, to a Sinners Converſion, as they did to the Head-ſtone of the Temple, *Zach.* 3.

Judges 16.

Aug.

Now of this Parable there are three parts; whereof, though the Similitude be of outward things, yet there is a Spiritual meaning, which we muſt ſearch out: We muſt break the Bone for the Marrow therein contained; and the Marrow lies in theſe three things, or particulars, taught us in the three parts of the Parable.

1. We have a Deſcription of the ſtate of a loſt Sinner, and what manner of man he is in his Natural Condition; In the younger Son's requiring his Portion of his Father, and going from his Father's Houſe into a farr Country, and miſſpending it all there, and making any ſorry ſhift rather than to return back to his Father's Houſe, *to the 17th verſe.*

2. We have the Return of a loſt Sinner, and how he comes into the ſtate of Grace, deſcribed in the Prodigal's coming to himſelf, and coming back, and humbling himſelf to his Father, *to the 22th verſe.*

3. The willingneſs of God to receive returning Sinners,

ners, and the delight he takes in ſuch, ſhewed in the Father's meeting his returning Son, and the joyful entertainment he gave him, *from the 22th verſe to the end of the Chapter.*

So that the firſt of theſe three Perſons is God the Father; he is intended: The other two are Sons of God; the one a humble repenting Publican, the other a proud murmuring Phariſee.

But how can theſe be called the Sons of God? *Queſt.*

God hath not only Sons by Adoption in Chriſt Jeſus, as all the Saints are; but he hath Sons by Creation; ſo Angels are the Sons of God: *There was a day, when the Sons of God came to preſent themſelves before the Lord.* And all men are the Sons of God: *He breathed into man the breath of life, Gen.* 2. 7. Man's Spirit is immediately from God, and therefore he is called *the Father of Spirits.* And *Adam* is called *the Son of God: which was the Son of* Seth, *which was the Son of* Adam, *which was the Son of God.* And thus theſe Publicans and Sinners were the Sons of God. *Anſw.* Gal. 3. Job 1. 6. Heb. 12. 9. Luke 3. ult.

And there are Sons of God by Profeſſion; ſo were the Jews in oppoſition to the Gentiles: *When Iſrael was a Child, then I loved him, and called my Son out of* Egypt, *Hoſ.* 11. 1. And thus the Scribes and Phariſees were the Sons of God.

It's true, there are divers Opinions of theſe two Sons, whom they ſhould repreſent. Some make the Angels the elder Son, and Man the younger; but this cannot be: For the Angels murmur not at the tenderneſs of God to loſt Man, as here the elder Son does, but rejoyce at it, *verſe* 7, 10. *of this Chapter, and* 14*th of the ſecond.*

Others think a Regenerate and Unregenerate man

man are here perſonated: But neither can this be; becauſe Regenerate men do not grudge at God's receiving the greateſt ſinners into Grace and Favour, but are glad, *Acts* 11.23. There are other thoughts in the Caſe beſides theſe.

But the moſt rational and moſt appearing Senſe and Interpretation is, That by the elder Son is meant the Scribes and Phariſees, and by the younger the Publicans and Sinners; for to theſe, and of theſe Jeſus was now ſpeaking. And as the elder Son grumbled that his Father ſo entertained his Prodigal Brother, that had ſpent all upon Harlots, *verſe* 30. ſo the Phariſees and Scribes murmured that Jeſus received Sinners, and did eat with them, *verſe* 2. And this ſenſe is held out by Chriſt himſelf in another Parable of two Sons: *Verily I ſay unto you* (meaning the Prieſts) *that the Publicans and the Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.* Self-judging Sinners ſooner get into a ſtate of Grace than Self-juſticiaries. The greateſt Sinners ſooner come unto Chriſt, than ſelf-conceited Moraliſts; Self-righteouſneſs keeps men off from Chriſt: Such men ſettle on their own bottoms.

Matth. 21.28, 31.

Rom. 9. 30, 31. & 10. 3.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Giveth the General Doctrine of the whole Parable; illuſtrating God's gracious Reception of Returning Sinners, in ſeveral particulars.

HAving ſhewed you the general import and parts of the Parable, I come now to the conſideration of thoſe ſeveral points of Doctrine therein contained. And firſt of that which ſeems to be the moſt conſpicuous Doctrine from the whole Parable. Afterwards of thoſe in their order, which reſult from the ſeveral Parts. The firſt I ſhall lay down, and illuſtrate in this Chapter; and it is this, That God doth very graciouſly receive returning ſinners. You know the Hiſtory of *David*'s carriage to *Abſolom* after he had murthered his brother; *David* was highly diſpleaſed with *Abſolom*, ſo that he was forced out of his Fathers preſence three years; yet after it is ſaid, *That the ſoul of King* David *longed to go forth unto* Abſolom. And when *Abſolom* afterwards came into his preſence, and bowed himſelf before the King, it's ſaid, *The King kiſſed* Abſolom, Chap. 14.

The general Doctrine from the Parable. 2 Sam. 13.

Alas,, this is nothing to the bowels of God towards a ſelf-bemoaning ſinner: *I have ſurely heard* Ephraim *bemoaning himſelf, therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will ſurely have mercy upon him.* Jer. 32. 18, 19, 20.

Note. God is irreconcilable to sinning Angels; he hath cast them down to Hell, and *delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto Judgment*, 2 Pet. 2. 4. but he sues to sinning men for reconciliation; 2 Cor. 5. 2. *As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* You know what mourning words he put into *Ezekiel's* mouth; Ezek. 33. 11. *Say to the house of* Israel, *who say, If our transgressions and sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of* Israel? No man can be so serious in any Case, as God is in this; in his desires that sinners should repent, and return and live.

There are some things that the Devil frequently gets into the thoughts of awakened sinners to dash them in this case.

1. One is the thought of God's Decrees; but herein the Devil doth grosly abuse both God and the sinner: For let me tell you, That as the Decrees of God did not at all clash with mans power given him in Innocency, to have been happy for ever, so neither do they clash with God's affectionate inviting lost sinners to return to him since the fall, no more than his Prescience would do if there were no Decree: Fore events are as sure upon God's Prescience as upon his Decrees: And this made *Socinus* to deny the Prescience of God.

2. And as the Decree was no cause at all of mans fall, but his own Will, he would hearken to the Woman, and to the Serpent, rather than to God, and

and would eat; so God's Decree is no cause at all of man's damnation: The Decree of God damns no man, but his own Will: *Why will ye die O house of* Ezek. 33.11.
Israel? I would, and ye would not. *Ye will not* Matth. 23.37.
come to me that ye might have life. We will not Joh. 5.40.
have this man to reign over us. God's Decree of Luke 19. 14.
Reprobation, as it's called, does only, for ought appears to me, leave some men to be proceeded with in a way of Justice. And assuredly mens damnation will be found to be of themselves: *O* Israel, *Thou hast destroyed thy self.* Psal. 13.9.

3. God's Decree is not the first thing that a sinner Note.
is to consider in his returning unto God, but God's Call, and Christ's Invitation. These are the first things which the sinner is to mind; *Why will ye* Matth. 11.28.
die? Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and John 6.37.
I will give you rest: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Mens election is not a ground for their returning to Note.
God; but their return to God is a proof of their election. It's true, Election is the first in order in God's acting, but Conversion is the first in order of ours: we must be Called before we can know that we are Elected, 2 *Pet.* 1.10. O remember this, that a sinners business, that he is put upon in the Scriptures, is his return to God, and to believe in Christ: This is his Call.

But then here the Tempter pusles again, and bids thee reason thus: If I knew that Christ died for me, I say for me, then I could set my self to believe, and that in hope. Poor Soul! look upon this as a Temptation also; and consider this well, That the Scripture hath given thee as much assurance, that Christ died for thee, as any sinner else that doth not yet believe,

or as to any believer before he did believe: Thou knoweſt as much of Chriſt's dying for thee, as any Saint in the world did before he did believe in Chriſt.

And again, why not Chriſt die for thee? becauſe thou art a ſinner? Why, he died for ſuch: wert thou not a ſinner, thou wouldeſt have no need of Chriſt; *The whole need not the Phyſician.* Chriſt had not died, if thou and I had not been ſinners. Or is thy doubt whether Chriſt died for thee, becauſe thou art ſo great a ſinner? conſider what *Paul* ſays in his own caſe, *Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief.* Many of the greateſt ſort of ſinners were called by Chriſt when he was on earth, Publicans and Harlots; that woman of *Samaria*, that was an Idolater and an Harlot; and that notorious woman called a ſinner, *Luke* 7. You cannot be ignorant how many Inſtances of this nature there are in Scripture; *Who was before a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, and injurious, but I obtained mercy.* So that well may the Scripture ſay, *The grace of our Lord is exceeding abundant*; hath abounded to flowing over: And *where ſin abounded, grace did much more abound.*

Matth. 9.

1 Tim. 1. 15.

Matth. 21.

John 4.

1 Tim. 1. 14.

Rom. 5. 20.

The matter is not what a ſinner thou haſt been, or art; but how thou ſtandeſt affected to thy ſinful ſtate, and how thy mind ſtands towards a better. If thou beeſt ſo far come to thy ſelf, as to be upon thoughts of returning to God, as it's ſaid of this Prodigal afterwards, now take heed of the Devil's Sophiſtry; now he will be puſling thee with doubtful diſputations and reaſonings, to hinder the main work, *viz.* the bewailing thy ſinful ſtate, and thy ſelf in it, and looking out for relief.

But

But I ſhall further clear this Point by ſeveral obſervables in the Parable; and indeed, amongſt all the Parables of Chriſt, this is the fulleſt of affections, and ſet forth in the livelieſt colours to humbled ſinners; and you ſhall ſee it in ſix Particulars.

First, you may obſerve how God exceeds the returning ſinner in affections: here the old Father ſees his Son a great way off; his eyes were not dim, as *Iſaac*'s were, who could not by his ſight diſtinguiſh between *Jacob* and *Eſau*, though cloſe by him. God can diſtinguiſh betwixt ſerious Penitents and feignedly turning *Judah*, *Jer.* 3. 10. *He knows what is in man*, *John* 2. 25. 1.

And then he ran to meet his Son; he ſtood not ſtill as a Father, an offended Father might have done, till his offending Son came to him: No, his bowels were moved towards him, as towards *Ephraim*, *Jer.* 31.20. Yea obſerve, the Son only goes to his Father, but the Father runs to meet the Son. There are greater affections in God towards a repenting ſinner, than in ſuch a ſinner towards God; God out-does him in affections.

And then, when they meet, the Father does not take him by the hand, which had been much for a diſpleaſed Father, but falls on his neck and kiſſes him, as *Joſeph* did on his Brethrens that had ſold him into *Egypt*.

O the riches of mercy in God towards repenting and returning ſinners! to ſuch he becomes the *Father of Mercies*, begetting mercy after mercy for them. Yea, once more obſerve, That though the repenting Prodigal Son ſaid in himſelf, *I will go unto my Father, and ſay, Father, I have ſinned*----- yet he did it not, till his Father had fallen on his neck 2 Cor. 1. 3.

and

Note. and embraced him. The kindlieſt repentings for ſins are after the ſinners ſenſe and experience of the free mercy and grace of God.

2. Secondly, you ſhall obſerve in the Parable, how God doth graciouſly take notice of ſmall beginnings of Grace in a true Convert; he excepts of ſparks before they flame; he deſpiſeth not the day of ſmall things in a ſeriouſly returning ſinner: when this Prodigal came to himſelf, and but ſaid, *I will ariſe, and go to my Father*; though yet a great way off God ſaw him, and went towards him.

When poor ſinners begin to ſet their faces towards God, he is much pleaſed with it; he notes their ſecret ſighings and hidden groanings. When the heart begins to melt, he makes much of ſuch beginnings; *he will not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoaking flax*, *Iſa.* 42. 3. A Hen will give over ſitting a rotten Egg, but while there is life in it ſhe will not leave it: Why ſo God will at length caſt off unſound hearts, feignedly turning ſinners, as they are called *Jer.* 3. 10. albeit he take ſome preſent notice of their external humblings, as of *Ahab*'s, 1 *Kings* 21. but if the heart of a ſinner be broken indeed, and indeed pointing to God, now he regards the offers of ſuch a ſinner; he will ſtrengthen the bruiſed reed, and not break it; and he will blow up the ſparks of ſmoaking flax, and not put them out. O the riches of Grace, of the grace of God, who before we come to act, accepts of ſecret and ſerious purpoſes! *I ſaid*, ſaith *David*, *I will confeſs my tranſgreſſion to the Lord, and thou forgaveſt the iniquities of my ſin*, *Pſal.* 32. 5. God's ear was at *David*'s heart, before *David*'s Confeſſion could be in his mouth; like that in *Iſai-*

ah

ah 68. 24. *Before they call I will answer*——

God takes notice of the preparations and first motions of the heart towards himself; *Because it was in thine heart to build me an house, thou didst well; forasmuch as it was in thine heart.* God's gracious and tender dealing with a sinner upon his first setting out towards him, is very observable. 2 Chron. 6. 8.

But here the lazy sinner must not think to ingratiate his dull acknowledgments of his sins, and to get acceptance with God at his cold *Lord have mercy upon me*; as if God would be found of such as these. He accepts of the Prodigal's thoughts and resolves of returning, because he saw he was restless in himself, till he was returned; *but the sluggard desireth and hath nothing*, Prov. 13. 4. God respects not the sparks of a flint, though he make much of those of smoaking flax. The cold forced Confession of hard hearted *Pharaoh*, *I have sinned this time*, *Exod.* 9. was not much to God: God rejects the humblings of a customary sinner, *that afflicts his soul only for a day*, *Isa.* 58. 5. such Penitents may expect much from God, *v.* 3. but God regards them little.

Jesus Christ was sent by his Father *to bind up the broken hearted*, *Isa.* 61. 1. The outwardly flourishing Hypocrite and proud Justiciary may spread forth their hands, yet God will hide his eyes from them; *and though they make many prayers*, God will not hear: But for poor souls that are serious in setting their faces towards God, and wait humbly on free grace; God will answer them before they call, and hear before they ask; that is, his mercy and grace shall prevent them: He observes the humble motions of their hearts with content: God graciously Isa. 1. 15.

ciously takes notice of small beginnings of grace in a true Convert.

3 Thirdly, God mercifully remits the remembrance of the former sins of a converting sinner. The elder Brother of this Prodigal upbraids him with his former loose life, but his Father does not mention it to him. The Silences of Scripture are Instructing; James 5. 11. the Holy Ghost remembers us of *Job*'s Patience, but speaks not a word of his Passions.

Take notice of it, thou poor relenting sinner; though the proud Pharisees of the world may throw thy former vileness, as dirt, in thy face, when thou art returning to God, yet God will not do so: Ezek. 18. 21. *If the wicked turn from all his sins, his sins shall not be mentioned to him.* A strange thing! he that remembers every thing, will forget such a mans sins.

Indeed you must not forget them, though God Ezek. 16. 11. will; no, not when they are forgiven: *You shall remember and be confounded —— when I am pacified toward you.* Yet God will not upbraid you with them, though you do your selves.

It is certain that God does, and will remember the sins of unhumbled and unchanged sinners; he hath sworn he will, *Amos* 8. 7. *The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of* Jacob, *i. e.* himself; 2 Sam. 15. 2. *surely I will never forget any of their works. I remember what* Amalek *did to* Israel. This was four hundred years since: Psal. 8. 13. *Now will he remember their iniquity.* But to Souls humbled for sin, *Thus saith the Lord*, Isa. 43. 25. *I, even I am he that will not remember thy sins.*

Fourthly,

Fourthly, as God will graciouſly remit the remembrance of former ſins to a returning ſinner, and ſo *cauſe his iniquity to paſs away*; ſo he *takes away his filthy garments, and clothes him with change of raiment*, v. 22. *The Father ſaid unto his ſervants, bring forth the beſt robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and ſhoes on his feet.* God will not let the enſigns of a ſinner, his filthy Garments remain on him: when he is humbled for ſin, when a ſinner is changed, God gives him change of raiment; *I ſpread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedneſs*, Ezek. 16.8. *and thy beauty was perfect through my comlineſs put upon thee*, v. 14. Theſe mean the righteouſneſs of Chriſt imputed, and the graces of his Spirit imparted to a Convert: Chriſt's righteouſneſs is his upper garment, and humility, and a meek and quiet ſpirit, and other graces, are his inward garments. This is another eminent act of grace, which God ſhews to a returning ſinner. Zach. 3. 2 Pet. 3. 4. Chap. 5. 5.

Fifthly, God rejoyceth at the return of a ſinner to him; *bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it*, v. 23. *and let us eat and be merry; for this my ſon was dead, and is alive*, v. 24. O what wonderful condeſcention is this in God, that he will be merry (to ſpeak with reverence) with a repenting ſinner! which is ſet out by Jeſus his eating with Publicans and Sinners, *v.* 1, 2. 5.

We read *Exod.* 32. 17. how God was refreſhed with his works of Creation, *he reſted on the ſeventh day, and was refreſhed*; and therefore he muſt needs be refreſhed at his new Creature, being a more excellent work than the former. There are more wonders in grace than in nature.

Jacob was marvellously revived when he heard that *Joseph* was alive, who had been dead many years in his thoughts, *It is enough*, Joseph *my son is alive*: Thus saith the Father of the returning Prodigal, Let's be merry, *for this my son was dead, and is alive.*

Gen. 45.

The Scripture also tells us how joyful Jesus Christ is at the sinners conversion, *Isa.* 53. 10, 11. *He shall see his seed, he shall see the travel of his soul and be satisfied. Seest thou this woman*, saith Jesus to *Simon* the Pharisee *Luke* 7.44. This Woman, *Mary Magdalen* (as some think) a great sinner, but a repenting sinner: The words of Christ are glorying words.

And so the Holy Ghost is contented to speak after the manner of men, as the Scripture doth. I say the Comforter is comforted at the repenting and returning of a sinner to God: as he is grieved and vexed at the unbelief, stubbornness, and obstinacy of sinners, *Isa.* 63. 10. so is he surely rejoyced at a poor Soul's repenting of sin, and returning from sin to God: and there is reason for it; because a sinners change is the great work of the Spirit; *a man is born again of the Spirit*, John 3.

And further, Angels rejoice at the repentance of sinners, *v.* 10. of this Chapter, *There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.* The Angels bear good will to mankind, since Christ took on him the nature of man. The holy Angels have great affection for converted sinners: They were at a distance from man after the fall, and are still, while men keep at a distance from God; But when a man is come home to God, now the Angels love him, and delight in him, and to do good

Luke 2.
Heb. 2.
Gen. 3. 24.

good for him; *The Angel of the Lord pitcheth his tent round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* And *are they not all miniſtring ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation?* Pſal. 34. Heb. 1. 14.

And returning ſinners themſelves have their ſhare in this joy, they take a part in the ſweet Conſort; the fatted Calf was killed for the returning Prodigal: It is now that the poor Sinner knows that Chriſt was his Sacrifice, and that Chriſt loved him, and gave himſelf for him. A converted Sinner knows the Spirit of God to be the Comforter, as well as the Sanctifier. Gal. 2. 20.

God begins uſually in Converts with great Sorrow, but ends with great Joy; as a Woman in travel hath firſt pain and ſorrow, but then *joy that a man is born into the World*, John 16. 21, 22. Converted Sinners have commonly at firſt ſtrong Conſolations; for they come into a new World, and into new Company and Acquaintance, ſuch as they never had afore, with God himſelf, and Jeſus Chriſt, and Saints; and *all things are new to them*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. Yet theſe great Joys are not laſting, though in a ſtate of Grace; the fatted Calf is not killed every day for them, but then eſpecially when the Spirit of Adoption ſuperſedes the Spirit of Bondage. It may be a Caſe, whether *Paul* preſently after his Converſion had not greater Joy, than in his taking up into the third Heaven: this occaſioned him great ſorrow, that great joy: O! *I was a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, but I obtained mercy.* Note. 1 Tim. 1.

Chriſt and Joy come into the Soul together. When Jeſus came in *Maries* womb towards *Elizabeth*, John *leaped for joy in* Elizabeths *womb*, Luke 2.

Thus you see how the returning Sinner to God is feasted; his water is turned into wine, as at the marriage Feast, *John* 2. There is joy and mirth at Feasts, and the Company at this Feast is such as much enlargeth the joy; not only Saints and Angels, but God himself; *If any man open to me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me*, Rev. 3. 20.

And therefore certainly, that repentance for sin, that bringeth not forth spiritual joy and comfort, is repentance to be repented of. God puts not a converted Sinner to sorrow for sorrows sake, but for joy and comfort, to make way for these. God would not have a repenting Sinner lie down in sorrow; but it is the self-confident sinner, or that trusts to lying refuges, who shall do thus, *Isa.* 50. 11.

6. Sixthly and lastly, God justifieth his own actions in receiving and entertaining returning Prodigals so graciously, and with such loving kindness and mercy. The elder Son murmured, and was in a great pett, that his Father had received his Prodigal Brother into his house again, and with love of such remark, *v.* 30. of this Chapter; *As soon as this thy son*, not my brother (he disdained this) *was come, that hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted Calf.* But what saith his Father to him? he justifies what he had done, *v.* 32. *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*

In the beginning of the Chapter we see how the Scribes and Pharisees murmured that Jesus received Sinners, noted Sinners, and eat with them: Now Christ to convince them of their pride, and envy, and

and ſelf-juſtifying, and ſelf-weening thoughts, and that the Publicans and Sinners, being now in the way of Converſion, was in a better condition than themſelves, he ſpake all theſe three Parables, which fill up this Chapter.

God will have men to know, that he hath more kindneſs for ſelf-judging and ſelf-abaſing Sinners, than for ſelf-juſtifying and ſelf-aſcribing righteous men. Theſe think they *need no Repentance*, v. 7. but thoſe think they cannot repent enough. Theſe *truſt in themſelves that they are righteous*, Luke 18. 9. thoſe ſee nothing but ſin in themſelves; *God be merciful to me a Sinner*, v. 13. and theſe were words more than mouth-deep; they came from a ſad heart in the deep ſenſe of Sin. Thoſe deſpiſe others, *v.* 9. theſe themſelves; *I am not worthy to be called thy Son.* Let men ſay what they will, or think what they will, God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens, and that juſtly. In theſe myſteries he exceeds not only the common Capacities of the world, but the pureſt Comprehenſion of the Saints; *Brethren, I would not have you ignorant of this myſtery*; ſpeaking of the Lord's ſevere way with the Jews, and gracious and favourable way with the Gentiles. St. *Paul*, *Paul* the learned, *Paul* that was taken up into the third Heaven, and that had abundance of revelations, and a man of great intimacy with Chriſt, yet he is in a maze at theſe diſpenſations, and cries out, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!*

Rom. 9.

Rom. 11.

2 Cor. 12. 2.

1 Cor. 2. 16.

Rom. 11. 33.

Now

Note. Now from what hath been ſaid on this laſt Particular we may eaſily ſee, That it is an ill ſign, when Profeſſors of Religion carry it proudly and inſultingly over poor Sinners, eſpecially when they begin to look towards Chriſt. There was a great difference betwixt the carriage of Chriſt, and of the Phariſees and Scribes in this Caſe: they wonder thus, that Jeſus would receive, and eat with Publicans and Sinners that followed him. And *Simon* the Phariſee, in *Luke* 7. was offended at Jeſus, that he would let that woman, which had been noted for a Sinner, touch him; and the like we read of the woman in *John* 8.

Thus you have ſeen it cleared of all Controverſie, That God doth graciouſly receive repenting and returning Sinners, how vile ſoever they have been, by theſe ſix Inſtances in this Parable; 1. God exceeds a returning Sinner in affection. 2. He takes notice of ſmall beginnings of grace in a Convert. 3. He upbraids not a repenting Sinner with his former ſins. 4. He takes away his filthy garments, and gives him change of raiment. 5. There is great joy in Heaven and earth at the converſion of a Sinner. 6. God juſtifies himſelf againſt the cenſures of men in all this.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Giveth the Reaſons of the Doctrine in the foreging Chapter; and the Demonſtrations of its unqueſtionable Truth.

HAving thus cleared the Doctrine, *viz.* That God doth very graciouſly receive returning ſinners: I ſhall now proceed to give you the grounds and reaſons hereof. And the firſt

Is from the Nature of God, which he calls his *Name*, *Exod.* 33. 19. and *his back parts*, *v.* 19. by which expreſſion he means his Relative Attributes, which are his Attributes that concern us ſinners: For God hath two ſorts of Attributes; ſome that deſcribe him what he is in himſelf, as *I am hath ſent thee*. His Infinity, Omnipotency, Eternity, there are his two parts or face, which he calls *his glory*; and ſo *Moſes* called them, *I beſeech thee ſhew me thy glory*, *v.* 18. and of which the Lord told him, *No man can ſee my glory and live*. No man in the body could bear ſuch a ſight, as Chriſt ſaid to his Diſciples in another caſe. *Reaſ.* 1. John 16. 12.

And then God hath Relative Attributes, which ſet him out what he is to us, as poor undone Sinners: theſe he calls his *back parts*; and theſe he ſhewed *Moſes*, and made proclamation of them for all repenting Sinners to mind for their encouragement.

And

Exod. 34. 6. *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty:* all but the last are to keep from despair; but that from presumption. All these Attributes but one, are encouraging to all sorts of sinners to repent and return to God, and that one is engaging and enforcing. When *Benhadad*'s Servants had heard that the Kings of *Israel* were merciful Kings, they put Sackcloth on their Loins, and Ropes upon their Heads, and say, *Peradventure the King of Israel will save thy life.* Why, there is no Sinner but hath heard that God is a merciful God to mournful Sinners; and the Sinner heareth not only one word of encouragement come from his mouth, but very many, and every one very inviting to a sinner to come in.

1 Kings 20.

The *Hebrews* say there are thirteen Titles in this Name of God, and but one of them vindicative; all the rest alluring to Sinners to repent, and come into God.

The Lord, the Lord God, Jehovah, Jehovah, Æl. These three Attributes may import his Essence and Subsistence in three Persons, as in 2 *John* 5. 7. *Jehovah, Jehovah,* the Lord doubles his Name for *Moses* his better notice, who it was that made this so solemn Proclamation. Jehovah, even Jehovah speaks, as in *Isaiah* 43.25. *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake.* And he adds, *The Lord, the Lord God. Æl,* that is, strong and mighty, to make good all that follows in his Name he here proclamed; as *Moses* says

ays in *Num.*14.17. *And now I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, &c.* Which shews plainly, that it was God himself that proclam'd his *Name*, and not *Moses*, as some have thought.

And here we may take notice, That to pardon sin is an act of power as well as grace; so saith our Lord Jesus, *Matth.*9. 6. ——*That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.* It follows,

Merciful. This is suitable to a Sinners misery; every Sinner being by nature *naked, and in his blood, and cast out to the loathing of his person; and by nature the child of wrath:* Now *the Lord, the Lord God merciful,* is a word indeed for a Sinner in misery to take hold on, as *Benhadad*'s Servants did on the word *Brother* from the King of *Israel*'s mouth: Yea, and God is not only merciful, but *the Father of mercies*, and he is so for ever; therefore it is said six and twenty times in one *Psalm* 136. *For his mercy endureth for ever.*

Ezek.16.

Eph.2.3.

2 Cor. 1. 3.

Gracious. This the Sinner, the convinced Sinner is to oppose to his own unworthiness; *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.* A Sinners call would not be of Grace, if there were any thing of worth in him; therefore the objects of God's Call unto grace are commonly *the foolish, and the weak, and the base, and the despised things of the world: Go and tell* John, *that the poor have the Gospel preached to them:* and this was amongst the wonders that Jesus did, which might convince *John*'s doubting Disciples that he was the Christ.

Exod.33.19

1 Cor. 1.26.

Matth.11.5.

Long-suffering. This may answer a repentant

Sinners fears that arise from his long withstanding the offers of grace; *Therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious.* —— *He went on frowardly in the way of his heart; I have seen his ways, and will heal him. Thou hast played the Harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me saith the Lord.*

Isa.30.18. Isa.57.18. Jer.3.1.

Abundant in goodness. Therefore can he overcome all the evil of a Sinner: He enables his people to overcome evil with good; much more can, and will he do it himself.

Rom.12.

And abundant in truth. This may answer all thy doubts about God's promises to receive returning Sinners: He often eminently asserts his truth in his Promises; —— *his truth endureth from generation to generation.* There have been famous proofs of the truth of God's Promises to such Sinners in all Ages; the Lord may say to all converted Sinners, *Ye are my witnesses* —— *Isa.* 43.10.

Psalm 100.

Pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin. This is to prevent despair that might rise from the multitude of sins and magnitude of sins. *Let the wicked turn to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;* Hebr. he will multiply to pardon. *Put away the evil of your doings, and then, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wooll.* Scarlet and Crimson are colours of a deep die, nothing can thorowly wash them out; Yes, *but the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin;* even sins that have the most hellish and deviliſh tincture. The wooll of those Countries was exceeding white; *Psalm* 147.16. *He giveth snow-like wooll;* pure wooll, as it was said of the hair

Isa.55.7. Isa.1. 1 John 2.7. Dan.7.9.

hair of the head of the Ancient of days, described there not in his Essence, but in his Presence. The expressions import, That God hath a white Stone (an Emblem of Absolution or Pardon, a custome among the Heathens) to give to the chief of Sinners, when repenting and returning to him. Ovid. Metam. lib. 15.

Keeping mercy for thousands. God is an unexhausted fountain of mercy; and therefore *mercy rejoyceth or glorieth against judgment*; as if there were a strife between Mercy and Judgment about sinners, and Mercy gets the victory: says the Prophet *Micah*, *He delighteth in mercy.* Mercy is as pleasing to God as to the Sinner. As the motion, which the woman of *Tekoa* made to *David* for *Absolom*'s return from banishment, was as pleasing to *David* as to *Joab*, who had a hand in it; it's said, *Joab perceived that the King's heart was towards* Absolom. James 2. 13. Mic. 7. 18. 2 Sam. 14. 1.

Lastly, *And that will by no means clear the guilty: i. e.* That shall be guilty of despising and abusing the former Attributes of God in this his *Name*, inviting Sinners to come in to him. When a Sinner comes to be contumacious and stubborn, and a presumptuous Sinner, then he is past mercy. As it is with some Felons, that are not allowed the Clergy: so it is with presumptuous Sinners, there was no Sacrifice in the Law for them.

The Soul that doth ought presumptuously, or with a high hand, *the same reproacheth the Lord, and that Soul shall be cut off from among his people.* So in *Deuteronomy*, *If a man bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination or stubbornness of mine heart—— The Lord will not spare him, his anger and his* Num. 15. 30. Deut. 29. 19, 20

jealouſie ſhall ſmoak againſt that man, and all the Curſes that are written in this Book ſhall lie upon him, and the Lord ſhall blot out his name from under Heaven.

So that this laſt Clauſe of God's Name, *And will by no means clear the guilty*, is terrible indeed; but it's ſo only to the preſumptuous and ſtubborn ſinner; and it's enough to make ſuch a ſinner *Magormiſſabib*, or fear round about, a terror to himſelf. But this part of God's *Name* takes not place, till all the former are rejected and deſpiſed. This, *and by no means will clear the guilty*, belongs not to thoſe that acknowledge themſelves to be guilty, and carry it accordingly. And this is the firſt Reaſon why God doth, and will ſo graciouſly receive ſelf-humbling and repenting ſinners, Becauſe it is in his Nature to deal ſo with ſuch.

Jer. 20. 3, 4.

Hoſ. 5. 15.

Reaſ. 2. A ſecond Ground or Reaſon of it is from the Son of God's eſpouſing the nature of man, and that after the fall of man, on purpoſe to bring back loſt man unto God. *Chriſt hath once ſuffered for ſins*; *i. e.* in the ſinners nature, that he might bring us to God, bring God and ſinners together again, that he might reconcile and make them friends. When Jeſus Chriſt took on him actually the Seed of *Abraham*, then the Angels ſung *on earth peace, good will towards men.*

1 Pet. 3. 18.

Luke 2. 14.

And indeed if God ſhould not entertain returning ſinners, and again take them into friendſhip, then did Chriſt take on him their nature in vain, and die in their nature in vain, and then is our preaching in vain, and your faith in vain, 2 *Cor.* 15.

It is to no purpose for a sinner to think of addressing himself to an absolute God; there can be no intercourse between God and him without Christ: Christ is the middle person that perswades with both. This is Christ's office and great work, to bring God and sinners together. 1 Pet. 3. 18.

There are great differences between them, that cannot without him be taken up; but Christ can take up all: He brings Publicans and Harlots home to God; *He preached peace to you that were afar off, as well as to them that were nigh*, *Eph.* 2. 17. Neither *Moses*, nor *Samuel*, nor *Noah*, nor *Daniel*, nor *Job*, might turn God's mind to the Jews, *Jer.* 15. 1. *Ezek.* 14. 14. but Jesus Christ hath turned the mind of God towards the greatest of returning Sinners; *Ye who were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled unto God*, Col. 1. 21.

Now considering how the work of Redemption was wrought in our Nature, and God is manifested in the Flesh on purpose to be a Redeemer; that our Nature in him might be meritorious, and savable in us; that God was manifested in the flesh to satisfie God offended by us; God was offended, and God was satisfied by God in the offenders Nature: How that the Scripture saith, The Father hath *sent forth his Son to be a propitiation for the remission of sins*; and *the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost*, Luke 19. 10. I say, these things considered, are a second Demonstration of the willingness of God to receive returning Sinners.

The Covenant of Grace shews, that God doth verily intend to be gracious to sinners. Had God continued the old Covenant of Works, or made a new *Reas.* 3.

Covenant

Covenant of Works, poor ſinners had been where they were, becauſe of their incapacity to perform the Conditions of ſuch a Covenant: But the Covenant being altered into a Covenant of Grace, the tearms are not, I will, if they will; but I will, and they ſhall; *I will put my ſpirit within you, and ye ſhall keep my judgments and do them.* God undertakes for himſelf and us.

Ezek. 36.27.

And it is notably evident in the Scripture, that the great deſign of God in the Covenant of Grace was, and is, to advance the glory of his grace, his free grace, and that upon objects unlikelieſt to natural Reaſon. The Goſpel is made up of acts of grace; 2 *Cor.* 2. 26. ——*You ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath choſen the fooliſh things of the world to confound the wiſe*——*that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence.*—*The good pleaſure of his will* is his motive, and *the praiſe of the glory of his grace* is his end, in all his merciful actings towards ſinners, *Eph.* 1. 5, 6.

Reaſ. 4. God is gracious to repenting and returning ſinners, becauſe he will be true to his word, and make good his promiſes to this purpoſe. *Iſa.* 1. 16. *Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings.*—— *Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord; though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow*——

The import of the Phraſe is, That upon repentance they ſhould have remiſſion of ſins, though they had been ſinners of the greateſt ſort: And which is to be noted, God hath deſigned the Lord Jeſus Chriſt *to give repentance* as well as *remiſſion of ſins*, Acts 5. 31.

The

The holy Scriptures are full of promiſes and offers to poor Sinners, highly engaging to repentance for ſin, and from ſin, *Iſa.* 55. 7. *Let the wicked forſake his way —— and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and he will abundantly pardon him.* That of the Apoſtle *Rom.* 5. 20. anſwers this of the Prophet, *Where ſin abounded, grace did much more abound.* And *Jer.* 3. 1. *Thou haſt played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me, ſaith the Lord. And come unto me,* ſaith Jeſus to Sinners labouring under the ſenſe of ſin, *Matth.* 11. 28. *and I will give you reſt.* Come unto me, and I will not bind heavy burthens, and grievous to be born, as the Scribes and Phariſees do, *Matth.* 23. 4. but I'le take off their burthens, and I'le give you a light burthen; *My yoke is eaſie, and my burthen is light, v.* 30. Come unto me, for *him that cometh to me I will in no wiſe caſt out.* Whom the Phariſees had caſt out, Chriſt received, *John* 9. And it's to be obſerved, That Jeſus Chriſt is ſaid to have a Commiſſion from his Father thus to treat ſinners; as he ſaid *John* 12. 49. *The Father gave me a commandment what I ſhould ſay ——* And ſo the Apoſtle *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, That he and the other Apoſtles had Commiſſion both from the Father and Son, to treat Sinners with the moſt winning offers, 2 *Cor.* 5. 20. *Now then we are Embaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Heb. 5. 18.
Rev. 11. 5.

Joh. 6. 37.

And now for a Sinner to queſtion whether God can forgive ſuch ſins as his, it is almoſt to act over *Cain*'s part, *Mine iniquity is greater than can be forgiven.* And if a Sinner queſtion whether God will forgive him, and receive him upon his return, this is to queſtion

Gen. 4.

stion truth it self, and his promises, for whom it is
Heb. 6. 18. *impossible to lie.*

Reas. 5. The last Ground I shall mention of the Doctrine, is the Presidents which are upon Record by the holy Ghost in the Case, as *Adam* that filled the World with sin; and *Manasseth* that filled *Jerusalem* with blood; yet these were pardoned Sinners upon their repentance and return to God.

There is a great deal of mercy in setting down the patterns of mercy in great Sinners: St. *Paul* saith as much of himself, and his own Case: 1 *Tim.* 1. 13, 16. *Who was a blasphemer, and a persecuter, and injurious, but I obtained mercy*: And *for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.*

It is true, *Paul* saith in *v.* 13. though he had been a blasphemer, and a persecuter, yet he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief: But this he says to shew that his blasphemy and persecution was not the sin against the holy Ghost, else he could not have obtained mercy: He acted out of his blind zeal, and not against knowledge, and of meer malice, as many of the Pharisees, and some of the Rulers did, *Matth.* 12. 24. Some, not all; St. *Peter* clears some, *Acts* 3. 17. ——*I wot that through ignorance ye did it*, that is, put Christ to death, *as did also your Rulers.*

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Wherein Application is made of the foregoing Doctrine, in two Uses.

HAving given you the Reasons of the Doctrine, and the Demonstrations of its undoubted truth, I shall next proceed to apply it.

Use 1. And it may serve for Exhortation to all manner of sinners upon return, or not upon return to God; O take heed of sin with impenitency and unbelief: If you die in your sins, it will lie upon your selves; God will clear himself, that he removed blocks out of your way, and answered all your Objections.

You say, you dare not come into God's sight, because you have been such vile sinners: But this is with *Cain* to go out of the presence of the Lord, *Gen.* 4. which was both his sin and judgment. It is at best sinful modesty for sinners to say so, or think so; but it is ordinarily rather the pride of their heart, than poverty of spirit. Despairing sinners are taught of the Devil to say and think *their iniquity is greater then can*, or that it may *be forgiven.* This is one of Satan's νοήματα, his Sophistical reasonings; he would have had the sorrowful incestuous person to have been *swallowed up of overmuch sorrow*, *v.*7. Satan prevails upon many troubled Consciences, to think every one doth but flatter them, that seeks to take them off from their despairing reasonings. 2 Cor. 2. 11.

Some ſinners are ſo critical in their coming to God, that God may ſay to them in this point, as he did to *Ephraim* and *Judah* in another, *Hoſ.* 6. 4. *O Ephraim, what ſhall I do unto thee? O Judah, what ſhall I do unto thee?* Some would be humbled above God's meaſure, before they will come to him; and ſome under: Some would come to God with their ſins, and ſome with hell in their ſouls: And thus who knows how many are damned by their own proud will, or wild humor. When a ſinner is come to himſelf, and feels he is loſt, and come out of himſelf, as to any ſuccour there, now is the ſinners time
Heb. 7. 25. to come to God in Chriſt, or come unto God by Chriſt; and when he comes, God will fall on his neck, and kiſs him, as the Father on his prodigal returning Son; he is ſure of welcome, if he now return.

It matters not out of what Countrey thou comeſt; how far diſtant thou haſt been from God; though thou haſt kept Swine as the Prodigal did; been the Devil's drudge; been a drunkard, a ſwearer, a very vicious perſon; haſt ſinned ſuch ſins as the Devil himſelf ſins not, yet hath tempted thee to ſin, and thy baſe nature joyned with him in the temptation; yet ſtill I ſay, if thou returneſt to God, he'll receive thee; yet remember his words to *Iſrael*, *Pſalm* 95.
Heb. 4. 7. *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart*: for as the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* ſaith, *he limiteth a certain day.*

O quaſh not motions, no not this days motions to return to God; the Devil may diſcourage thee from them, but God will not. When the Shepherd found his loſt ſheep, he did not throw his hook at it; but laid it on his ſhoulder, and brought it home: when God meets with a returning ſinner, he doth not ſpeak

in

in paſſion and wrath to him, as *Ahab* did to *Elijah*, *Haſt thou found me, O mine enemy*? but as tenderly as Jeſus did to *Peter* the firſt time he met him after he denied him.

And though a ſinner have not legs of his own to return; yet if there be a mind to it, as there was in the impotent man to go into the Pool, he ſhall go upon the legs of God's grace, as that impotent man did: God hath *laid help on one that is mighty, even Jeſus the great Shepherd of the ſheep.* He is *come to ſeek and to ſave that which is loſt.* John 5. Heb. 13. 20. Luke 19. 10.

O then let the gracious dealing of God with this Prodigal invite thee, who art yet at a diſtance from God, now to return: This is much in God's mouth; *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Ez.* 33. 11. *Yet return again unto me, ſaith the Lord.* Such mercy and pity as this ſhould be a Loadſtone to thy heart; thy heart ſhould be broken or melted, as that ſinful womans was, in the thoughts of the poſſibility of being pardoned and accepted of God. No ſinning Angels ſure had ſuch mercy as this; O deſpiſe not ſuch mercy, neglect not ſo free ſalvation. Jer. 3. 2. Luke 7.

But do you preach mercy to impenitent and hardened ſinners? *Anſw.* Yes, inviting mercy; Chriſt himſelf did ſo; he *came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance*: Indeed he calls them to mercy by the way of repentance; *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt*: the invitation is to the worſt of ſinners, ſenſible of ſin as a burthen. It is true, there is no mercy for any ſinner without repentance, and there is mercy for great ſinners with it. A ſinner muſt come to himſelf before he come to God, as the Prodigal did before he came to his Father, *v.* 17. *Queſt.* *Anſw.* Matth. 11. 28.

As for meaſures of conviction and humiliation, take heed of the Devil's trap and ſnare here: Now thou art off of the danger of preſumption, he plays his game of deſpair; but let this over-rule the Caſe, when it comes to be thine, That he hath the happieſt meaſure of conviction and humiliation for ſin, whoſe conviction and humiliation brings him out of himſelf to Chriſt.

But ſenſe of ſin, and ſorrow for ſin there muſt be: If the Prodigal had not come to himſelf, when pinched with want, and thought his Father's houſe, and any ſervice there, a better condition than the far Countrey; his Father had not had compaſſion on him. If any ſinner will ſtill be what he is, and do not repent, that he may return, he hath nothing to do with thoſe parts of God's Name, *Merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin*; but that cloſe of God's *Name, And will by no means clear the guilty.*

For what would ſinners have of God? to be ſaved in their ſins? It's not poſſible; God ſent his Son Jeſus *to ſave his people from their ſins, and to turn them from their iniquity, Acts* 3.26. If God ſhould ſave a ſinner in his ſins, this is mercy that would overthrow his truth and juſtice: God will ſtand to his word, and receive thee graciouſly if thou repenteſt and returneſt; but withal he muſt ſtand to his word, and ſave thee in a Scripture way, and in a way agreeable to all his Attributes, which is by the way of repentance and returning to him. When ſinners cannot reſt in a ſtate of ſin, nor in a ſtate of ſelf-righteouſneſs, but they ſee they muſt come to Chriſt for reſt, he will bid theſe ſinners welcome.

Matth. 2. 21.

Queſt.

Queſt. But is it in a convinced ſinners power to return to God? The Scripture ſaith, *The way of man is not in himſelf*; nor is it in man that walketh to direct his own ſteps. I Anſwer, That though the act of a ſinners returning be in God's power, and not his own; as it's ſaid of times and ſeaſons, *Acts* 1. yet the ſinner may ſeek it of God; *Turn thou me, O Lord, and I ſhall be turned*, ſaid *Ephraim*, *Jer.* 31.18. Though it be God's work, yet he works it in the way of means, which ſinners may and muſt uſe. *Queſt.* Jer. 10.23. *Anſw.*

And that a ſinner does not return to God, it lies not ſo much in his Cannot, as in his Will not: They refuſe to return. Jer. 8. 5.

Object. I but God hears not ſinners; to what purpoſe is it then for ſuch to pray that God will turn them? *Anſw.* It's true for ſinners that do, and would live in ſin, God regards not their prayers: But if thou comeſt to God affected with thy ſinful ſtate, God will regard thy prayers, though thou art not yet in a ſtate of grace: It was *Manaſſeh* his caſe, and is indeed the caſe of moſt Converts: There are ſome things in thoſe that are not yet converted, that are in order to their Converſion. Thy ſenſe of thy diſtance from God, and deſire of a return, why this is a leſs grace that makes way for a greater. This in anſwer to that Objection. *Object.* John 9. *Anſw.* Pſal. 66.18.

O then, if the power of returning to God be in God's hand, ſit not ſtill, but ſeek it there. When all the Corn in *Egypt* was in *Joſeph*'s Garners, ſhould a poor Egyptian ſay, He had none, I have none; *Joſeph* hath all at his diſpoſing, ſo that I may ſit ſtill and ſtarve? No; but therefore I'le go where it is to be had. This is thy caſe who wouldſt return to God,

God, but haſt not power; Reſolve, I'le go to him that has.

Object. *Object.* I, but I am not certain that God will part with power of returning to me; *He hardens whom he will*, *Rom.* 9. 18. leaves to their hardneſs of heart, and ſo to their impotency and weakneſs. *Anſw.* But this is one of the Devil's ſuggeſtions to poor ſinners, who have but the thoughts of returning to God; and ſo let ſuch look on it.

Anſw.

Why will not you do in this caſe, as the Lepers did in theirs? *If we ſit ſtill we die, if we go in to the Syrians we ſhall but die, it may be they may ſave us alive:* and dare not you venture your ſouls on God, as well as thoſe Lepers their lives on the Syrians.

2 Kings 7.

Nineveh fell to prayer and faſting as well as they could, to prevent being deſtroyed, after ſentence was pronounced upon them; And what was their encouragement? *It may be, or who knoweth, or who can tell, if the Lord will turn away from his fierce anger, that we periſh not?*

Jonah 3. 9.

Now there is no ſinner, that hath a mind to return to God, but he hath as much encouragement to beg grace of him to return.

Suppoſe there were but a poſſibility of thy returning to God in the uſe of God's means for it, why this is a mercy that the Angels which ſinned never had ſince they ſinned; they have no poſſibility of making peace with God: I but thou haſt more than a poſſibility; there is probability to encourage thee. A ſinner is in a probable way, whilſt he ſeeks grace in the means of grace, as the impotent man was of Cure, while he lay by the Pool, *John* 5. And above this, though God be free in dealing forth his grace; and

and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and is gracious to whom he will be gracious, *Exod.* 33. 19. yet God hath left thee good assurance, if thou keep in the way of his instituted means for the conversion of sinners; *Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you,* Mark 7. 7. *I said not to the seed of* Jacob, *seek ye me in vain,* Isa. 49. 19.

So that although the sense of thy lost condition, which is coming to thy self, as this Prodigal did; and thy thoughts and mindfulness of thy return to God, like the Prodigal to his Father; I say, though these be not thy return, yet they are in order to it; this is, as I said, less grace, to make way for greater. They are those that like their distance from God in their state of sin, that are likely to perish in that state; *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, John* 3. 19.

But if God have given thee the will to return to him, he will give thee to do it; and in thy return thou wilt be graciously received, as the repenting, returning Prodigal was by his Father; for he was the representation of sinners in the case.

Use 2. Secondly, If God will graciously receive a repenting and returning sinner, then surely he will do so by a returning Saint: Saints are subject to relapses and backslidings; the promise of Cure supposes the Distemper: *I will heal their backslidings*: the like in *Jer.* 3. 12. *Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon thee; for I am merciful saith the Lord, and will not keep anger for ever; only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast scattered thy ways to strangers*—— Hos. 14. 4.

Nay,

Nay, above this, relapſing Saints have not only a promiſe of a gracious reception upon their return; but they have a promiſe, that they ſhall return to their vigour in grace; *He went on frowardly in the way of his heart; I have ſeen his ways, and will heal him.* *Peter* roſe from his fall preſently; at a look of Jeſus he got up again. And it is notable what tender care our Lord Jeſus took ſo ſoon as he was riſen, that *Peter* ſhould be comforted in his ſorrow for his fall, leſt he ſhould be ſwallowed up of overmuch ſorrow, which is a deſign of Satans in the caſe, 2 *Cor.* 2.11.

Jer. 57. 17, 18.

Luke 22. 61.

Mark 16. And therefore Chriſt diſpatched an Angel to *Peter*, to acquaint him with his being riſen again.

2 Cor. 15. 5. And Jeſus himſelf appeared to *Peter* firſt of all the Diſciples, when he was riſen from the dead.

But my Brethren, I beſeech you conſider this, That it is better to prevent a diſeaſe, than to be healed of it: for the preventionof relapſes prevents much pain and grief of Soul. O then let Chriſtians be watchful to prevent diſtances between God and them; and you that have made ſuch, in leaving your firſt Love, and have receded from the kindneſs of your youth, and have abated of your former humble and cloſe walking with God, your former delight and power in prayer—— O bethink your ſelves of coming to your ſelves, and of your returning to God, in holy and humble converſe with him.

Rev. 2. 4. Jer. 2. 2.

Till then your bones continue out of joint, as *David*'s were, and the pain in ſetting them is to come; and though they be ſet, yet you may halt of them ever after, as *Jacob* did upon the blow the Angel gave him on his thigh; yet this

Pſal. 22. 14.

Gen. 32.

this is better than not to return to your former lively and active ſtate in grace.

O therefore, ye backſliding Chriſtians, reſolve as ſhe did *Hoſ.* 2. 7. *I will go and return to my firſt husband, for then it was better with me than now:* and your returning muſt be with melting hearts; *They ſhall come with weeping, and with ſupplications will I lead them.* Backſliding Chriſtians ſhould grieve and trouble more at their parting with God, than *Micah* did, when his Idols were taken away; *Ye have taken away my Gods, and what have I more?* take heed of parting with God. And thus much for the general Scope and Doctrine of the Parable, *viz.* That God doth very graciouſly receive returning ſinners. Judg. 18. 24.

CHAP. V.

Proceedeth to the two general Doctrines resulting from the first part of the Parable: particularly shewing, The natural and lusting desire that is in man to forsake God; and the Reasons hereof.

Verses the 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far Countrey, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the land, and he began to be in want.

And he went and joyned himself to a citizen of that countrey, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the ſwine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

I Have done with the general Scope and Doctrine of this quick and lively Parable, as *Luther* calls thoſe of this Chapter: I now come to ſpeak particularly of the three Perſons which act their diſtinct parts in this Parable, the Father and his two Sons.

And our Saviour firſt holds forth to our view and conſideration, the younger Son, a Prodigal; and the Picture of every natural man.

And firſt, we have his proud and peremptory Requeſt, or rather Demand, of his Father; *Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me:* He would have his Father make his Will, and be his own Executor in his life; yea preſently.

There are two things obſervable in this youngſter: 1. He would have his Portion in his own hand, and be at his own finding; he would caſt off his Father, and be independent: A ſtrange thing! Fathers ſometimes caſt off their Sons; but here the Son caſts off the Father, and will give no account of any thing he has or does: He gets his Portion into his own hand, and then goes *into a far Country*, *v.* 12. and part of the 13th.

2. This proud and heady Courſe of his was the cauſe of all his enſuing woes and miſery: For hereupon followed, 1. His Luxury, *v.* 13. *And there waſted his ſubſtance with riotous living.* 2. His Calamity followed his Luxury at the heels, *v.* 14. *And when he had ſpent all, there aroſe a mighty famine in the land, and he began to be in want.* He

ſatisfied his luſts, until he had nothing left to ſatisfie Nature.

And theſe two literal things in the Parable yield us theſe two ſpiritual Points of Doctrine, intended by him who ſpake the Parable.

Doct. 1. *That every man by nature hath a luſting deſire to leave God, and live at his own hand; he would ſtand on his own legs and bottom, and be at his own diſpoſe: Thus it is with every man by Nature.*

Doct. 2. *This leaving of God, and walking after their own luſts, is the reaſon of mens ſad eſtate both for ſin and ſorrow.*

1. That every man by nature hath a luſting deſire to leave God, and live at his own hand, and be at his own diſpoſe: Thus it is with us all by nature; for this Prodigal Son is the picture of every natural man; and this is naturally mans proper inclination and tendency.

Here man loſt his ſtate of innocency, he waved God and his innocency together; and which, 'tis poſſible, he kept but a few hours; I cannot ſay days, as ſome do.

And this luſt of his to leave God, and provide better for himſelf, as he thought, than did God, broke forth at a ſhort temptation; Satan ſoon got his ear and heart to this curſed way, to caſt off God, and to be as God himſelf; he ſought to be an independent being; in plain terms, to be no more a Creature; ——*Ye ſhall be as Gods:* He took off his heart from God, to be a God himſelf. And man left God at firſt on a double account or reaſon.

Gen. 3. 5.

1. Upon

1. Upon a diſlike of his eſtate, though a large and lovely one, a goodly heritage, as *David* ſaid of his. He had hard thoughts of God, becauſe he had put a reſtraint upon him from eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; he received a conceit that God kept him too much under, the Devil's own ſin, who in diſlike left his firſt eſtate, *Jude* 6. out of an aſpiring mind to a higher eſtate than an Angels. So that man's firſt conception of ſin lay in high thoughts of himſelf, and hard thoughts of God; and the nature of man hath taken the infection, and is apt to have high conceits of ſelf, and hard conceits of God, as that King had 2 *Kings* 6.33. *This evil is of the Lord, what ſhould I wait for the Lord any longer*? And that Servant of his Lord, who intruſted him but with one talent, *I knew thou waſt a hard Man.* Pſal. 16. Gen. 3. Matth. 25.

2. Man at firſt left God upon point of fear; he puts God into an ill ſhape, and then durſt not come near him. Adam *hid himſelf from the preſence of the Lord*; and when he was asked why, *I heard thy voice*, ſays he, *and was afraid.* So that you plainly ſee how man caſt off God betimes; gets himſelf, as he thought, from under God's government, and will have his own way: And this grievous diſtemper infects the whole blood; it is an hereditary and epidemical dyſcraſy and diſeaſe of mankind; it is even in the godly themſelves, ſo far as grace does not overpower it. Gen. 3.8.

Pharaoh was an eminent inſtance in the caſe, *Exod.* 5. 2. *Who is the Lord that I ſhould obey him*? High language that layeth God low: as *Nabal* ſaid of *David* in a deſpiſing way, *Who is* David? *and who is the ſon of* Jeſſe? ſo ſaid *Pharaoh* of God, 1 Sam. 25.10.

Who

Who is the Lord, that I—— The like language we read of, *Job* 21. 14. *They say unto God depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:* and this is the voice of every natural man's heart, though it break not out at his lips; *The fool hath*
Psal. 14. 1. *said in his heart there is no God;* so he would have it.

It is God's restraining grace that keeps the world of natural men from this Atheism; as he said to *A-*
Gen. 20. 6. *bimelech, I withheld thee from sinning against me.* Restraining grace is an awe that God keeps upon mens Consciences, which makes them forbear some sins, though they do not hate the sins. *Judea* had
Hos. 2. 2. an adulterous heart, though God hedg'd up her way with thorns.

Man would be at liberty from God and his Will,
Job 11. 12. to follow and fulfill his own; *Man is born like a wild Asses Colt;* vain man is so, saith *Zophar.* He hath a *principium læsum,* a devillish principle in his nature; an impulse to range about the earth, as
Job 1. 7. Satan said of himself; his lust would know no bounds, and so indeed he would be a God to himself. *Moses* was instead of God to *Aaron, Exod.* 4. 16. but that was to discover the mind of God to him; for *Aaron* had not that familiarity and intimacy with God
Exod. 33. 11. as *Moses* had; *The Lord spake to* Moses *face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend;* that is, most familiarly, as he did to none of the Prophets af-
Deut. 34. 10. ter.

But natural men would be as Gods to themselves;
Psal. 14. 4. *Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us.* My Brethren, whilst we seek to please our selves, and to be self-depending, what is this less then to seek to be as Gods? this was it that man sought for at the be-

beginning; *God knows ye shall be as Gods*, saith the Serpent when he tempted *Eve*, and she soon nibbled at this bait. Gen. 3. 5.

When men are and will be their own motives and ends, they are as Gods unto themselves. Carnal men make many Gods, they set up Idols in their hearts; and as they make Gods to themselves, so they make themselves their chief God: as it was said of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, the notorious Grecian Monarch, called by Divines a Type of Antichrist, and by a famous Historian *Epimanes*, a mad man; of him it is said in the Prophet *Daniel*, *That he would exalt himself, and magnifie himself above every God.* Ezek. 14. 3. Dan. 11. 36. Polybeus.

Indeed men cannot but own themselves Creatures, in asking and receiving, as the Prodigal here, *Father give me my portion:* but then they are, or would be Gods in using what they receive; for let them receive wealth, or beauty, or strength, or honor, or parts, *they consume them upon their lusts.* And this way a man makes a God of himself, his own humour and lust is his end in all. Nay, and in some respects men would be as Gods in receiving; for they would have to the uttermost of their minds and phansies. Our first Parents would have had more than God gave them, though he gave them all this lower world, and much of the world above too; his own image and likeness, and near communion with himself, and power to have kept this blessed state; yet they thought not this enough, it sufficed them not, but they would be as Gods. James 4. 3.

And still men would live, and do live, as *without God in the world*, as the Apostle saith. And this is one Reason, and a chief one, why natural men refuse Eph. 2. 12.

refuse grace, because grace layeth man low, and raises God high: grace casts man out of himself, and prompts him to self-denial, which he cannot bear:
Matth. 19. That young, rich, great man, could not part with self for Christ.

The Reasons of the Doctrine.

Reas. 1. The first is from man's instability and mutableness; he is, as *Jacob* said of *Reuben*, *unstable as water*:
Gen. 49. 4. Man is a Creature given to change; *why*
Jer. 2. 36. *gaddest thou about so much to change thy way*? man would change every thing.
Dan. 7. 25. That King, that came after the ten in *Daniel*, changed *times and laws.*
Isa. 24. 5. The Lord complained of the Jews, that they had
Ezek. 5. 6. changed the *Ordinance*, and had changed his *Judgments.*

Jer. 2. 11. Yea, they changed their God: *Hath a Nation changed their Gods? but my people have changed their glory.* Man by nature is a Novatian, as the
Plin. Philosopher said, *Est natura hominum novitatis avida*, man is for some new thing: He has an itch
Acts 17. 21. this way, as it's said of the Athenians, that they spent their time in nothing, but either *to tell or to*
Judg. 5. 8. *hear some new thing*: And of *Israel* it is said, *they chose new Gods.*

Man naturally loves change of states and conditions, as feaverish palates do change of beer, and it may be none will please. This Prodigal liked not to live with his Father, nor near home; he must go into a far Countrey. It may in some sort be said of every natural mans heart, as of *Nebuchadnezzars*,
Dan. 4. 16. *a beasts heart was given unto him.* Man would have change of pasture, as some beasts will not stay where

where they are put, but break and leap Hedges to get into new grounds. Not only many of the Angels *left their first estate*, but all men in the first man left theirs; Man still wants something. *Amnon*, though a King's Son, yet was as if he wanted all, while he wanted his Lust of *Tamar*. Jude 6. 2 Sam. 13.

And *Haman*, when he had the greatest favour, honour, and estate of a Subject, yet he wanted *Mordecai*'s knee.

Man is very much a dissatisfied and discontented Creature, till grace comes, and much grace: It was much grace that brought St. *Paul* to so contented a mind. And this is one Reason why naturally man would be loose from God, and left to himself, because he is so uncertain and unstable a Creature. Phil. 2.

A second Reason of the Doctrine is from the ignorance that is in all natural men; this makes them to leave God, and live on self. *Reas.* 2.

First, a natural man's ignorance of himself; he knows not, or considers not, what it is to be a Creature, so weak a Creature as himself is; for if he did, he would not trust so much, as its plain he doth, to his own strength; strength of parts, or strength of purposes, or strength of phansie: vain man would be wise, *i. e.* in his own thoughts, in contriving his own happiness, though *man be born like a wild Asses colt*, but little differing from a bruit; he is like the beast,---*like the beasts that perish*. How could the hop stand without the pole, or the vine without the wall? And yet man thinks he could live without God, and in a sort does. Job 11. 12. Psal. 49. 12, 20. Eph. 2. 12.

If holy men think themselves, at least sometimes, not to have *the understanding of a man*, as *Hagur*, *Prov.* 30. 2. *but foolish and ignorant as a beast*, as *Asaph*, *Psal.* 73. 22. What is the natural man's wisdom? the Apostle saith, Their wisdom
Rom. 1. 22. makes them fools; *professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.* The wisest of meer natural men, and the learnedst, know not enough what it is to be Creatures, and through this ignorance would be as Gods.

For what is it to be a Creature? not to be of our selves, or to our selves, not to be our own; *Ye are*
2 Cor. 6. *not your own*, saith St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians*; and
2 Cor. 10. 31. so *whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* And therefore when men would live of themselves, and to themselves, they would live above the capacity of Creatures.

Some great men, through this ignorance of themselves, have aspired to be Gods over other men: So
Ezek. 28. 2. did the Prince of *Tyrus*, *Thou hast said I am a God, I sit in the seat of God:* And *Herod* was well pleas-
Acts 12. 22. ed when the people cried him up for a God. And *Alexander* the Great could scarce be content to be a man; and every man that hath not grace enough to make him the more humble and modest (for as grace is given to the humble, so grace maketh humble) every man would be as God to himself; he would please himself, and live to himself; he would be his own rule, and his own end, and serve his own turn on God as well as men.

Now, I say, this is because men naturally are ignorant of what it is to be a Creature; what it is to be of another, and for another; even of God, and
Rom. 11. 36. for God; *of him, and through him, and to him are*

all

all things. The Lord hath made all things for himself. The wheel ſpins not for it ſelf, but for him that made it, and him that bought it: and ſo the Ax cuts not for it ſelf. By living of, or to our ſelves, we do, as far as we can, overthrow our being Creatures: and men conſider not the evil of offering to ſit in the ſeat of God. Prov. 16. 4.

Suppoſe other Creatures ſhould be to themſelves, ſhould be proud towards us, as we are prone to be towards God, and ſhould refuſe to do our ſervice and work, as we too often do by God, we would think it a ſtrange *ataxie*, and the courſe of nature to be quite inverted; we ſhould ſay as *Ptolomy* of the great and unexpected Eclipſe at Chriſt's death, *Deus naturæ patitur*; the God of Nature ſuffereth; this is the ſpirit of a man towards God, wherever there is not grace, and ſo much grace to teach us better. Though he made us, yet we have an itch to be our own, to ſerve our own turn, and not his; and in doing ſo, we ſeek ſo much as in us lyeth, to alter our ſelves from the condition of Creatures.

Secondly, Our ignorance of God makes us to turn our back upon him; men ſee not a ſufficiency of good in God, and ſo they look for it elſewhere. God is an unknown God to the moſt of men; and though they profeſs him, yet that may be written on their Profeſſion, which was upon the Altar that St. *Paul* ſaw at *Athens*, *To the unknown God*: Many men phanſie God to be like themſelves. Through deceit *they refuſe to know me, ſaith the Lord, Iſa.* 9. 6. and *every man is brutiſh in his knowledge*, Jer. 10. 14. Acts 17. 23. Pſal. 50. 21.

What is the reaſon that the Saints depend on God, and dare not ſcatter their truſt to Creatures? becauſe they know him, and have acquaintance with him; *They that know thy Name will put their truſt in thee:* God gives them a heart to know him: and this was the reaſon why *Pharaoh* would be his own Lord, *I know not the Lord, Exod.* 5. 7. Becauſe men know not the Lord ſo, as to know that their happineſs is bound up in him, as *Judah* ſaid, that *his fathers life was in the lads life, Gen.* 44. 30. Therefore men leave God, and rely on themſelves, or ſome other Creature; *She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oyl, and multiplyed her ſilver and gold, wherewith they made Baal*; ſo theſe laſt words are in the *Margin, Hoſ.* 2. 8.

Pſal. 9. 10. Jer. 24. 7.

There is a natural inſtinct in all men to deſire to be happy, but where this Golden vein lyes, every man by nature is to ſeek; men are ſcepticks or ſeekers indeed in this; but miſs as much, or more than they that make experiment of the Philoſophers Stone.

The wiſeſt men of this world have abounded in their conjectures of it; there have been fourſcore, ſome ſay a hundred, of diſtinct opinions in the caſe, *viz.* wherein true happineſs lieth, and all have been miſtaken: For it is to be obſerved, they have all ſeated the *Summum bonum*, man's chief good, in the Creatures, and not in God.

But grace teacheth us to find it in God, and in God alone, in the enjoyment of God himſelf; *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I deſire beſides thee.*

Pſal. 73. 25.

Solomon

Solomon, who might better be called Nature's Secretary than *Ariſtotle*, ranſack'd the whole Creation, *all things under the Sun* for it, but found it not; only *vanity and vexation of ſpirit* inſtead of it.

Every Creature anſwered *Solomon*, when he ſought felicity in them, as the Depths and the Sea anſwer men who ſeek wiſdom in them, *It is not* Job 28. 14. *in me*, nor it is *not in me*. Men ſet up falſe marks, when they aim at contentation and ſatisfaction in any creature excellency; ſo that if they do hit the mark they aim at, they hit a falſe mark. Suppoſe a man aim to be happy in riches, or honour, or pleaſures, or moral vertues, or parts, or humane learning, and ſuppoſe he hit the mark he aims at for happineſs; why he hits a falſe mark, and ſo is as far from true happineſs as before he took his aim.

The enjoyment of all theſe, laid to the enjoyment of God himſelf, are but as *Eſau*'s Pottage to the Bleſſing or Birthright; *Men lay out their ſtrength* Iſa. 55. 2. *for that which ſatisfieth not, and their money for that which is not bread*, who hunt for happineſs in the Creature: They are like a man ſick of a Fever, O if he had but drink, how well ſhould he be! but this is the cry of his Diſtemper; for give him drink to his mind, and it does but feed his Diſeaſe, not ſatisfie Nature, but diſturb it more.

It's conſiderable what the Lord ſaith in this caſe; *Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, nor the* Jer. 9. 23. *mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me*, &c. Acquaintance with God is more to a man's peace and compoſure of mind than all the former; *Ac-*

quaint

Job 12.21. *Acquaint now thy ſelf with him, and be at peace: thereby good ſhall come unto thee.*

It is true, we may ſeek comfort in the Creature, and find it; yet it's imperfect comfort; it's comfort but in part: As we know here but in part. We may look for light from the Moon, and have it; but we may not think to find the light of the Sun in the Moon. And as great a difference there is between the Joy we may have in the Creature, and that we may have in God; Pſal.104.34. *My meditation of him ſhall be ſweet.* When Pſal.16.5,6. *David* ſaid, *The Lord is the portion of mine Inheritance*; he adds, *the lines are fallen unto me in pleaſant places.*

What vertue God hath put into the Creature, we may ſeek it; but when we find it, it is to mind us of much more to be found in God: God intends not that the comfort we find in any of the Creatures ſhould draw our hearts from him, but to him, and Joſh.15.19. more to him than before: *Caleb*'s daughter muſt have the upper ſprings with the neather in her bleſſing. In a word, we muſt ſeek God in the Creature, as *Jacob* ſaw God in *Eſau*'s face, and ſeek the Creature for God, as well as our ſelves, or elſe we miſtake the way to true comfort and content in both, which method no natural man obſerveth. And thus much for the ſecond Reaſon of the point.

Reaſ.3. A third Reaſon is the pride of man; man's pride makes him turn his back upon God, and think to ſtand by himſelf: Man is naturally a proud Creature, as the ſinning Angels were; man is among the chil- Job 42.3 dren of pride; Pſal.10.4. *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not ſeek after God; God is not in all his thoughts.*

What

What is pride but an opinion of a man's self-sufficiency and self-excellency? as we see in that proud Pharisee, *I am not as other men, nor as this Publican*: and in those proud superstitious Jews, who said to others, *Stand by thy self, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou*: This is the dialect and language of pride; it is the vent of tow'ring thoughts of a man's self: You may more easily pull down the strongest Castle, than the proud heart of man. *Pharaoh* was long plagued before he would own God; *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his Voice?* This was the Leaven which first sowred man's heart in his fall, *We shall be as Gods*, *Gen.* 3. and ever since natural man would be some great one, as *Simon Magus* gave out himself to be.

Luke 18.
Isa. 65. 5.
Exod. 5.
Acts 8. 9.

Man is not easily made nothing in his own thoughts; he very hardly owns his need and want in spirituals: *I am rich, and want nothing*, was the brag of the *Laodiceans*. Now as God *beholds the proud afar off*, *Psal.* 138. so the proud heart of men by nature keeps afar off from God; *They say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

Rev. 3. 17.
Job 21. 14.

The pride of man's heart hath a hand in those two soul-undoing sins, that keep men off from God, Presumption and Despair. Presumers, *through the pride of their countenance, will not seek after God*: and Despairers will see some worth in themselves before they will go to God. It is not usually through the excess, but defect of humiliation, that souls in despair will not cast themselves on Christ, as they said *Jer.* 2. 25. *There is no hope*; No: *I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.* Despair

Psal. 10.

is

is a proud ſin, as well as Preſumption: It made *Spira* wiſh he were above God.

The pride of man is a greater barr againſt the grace of God, than groſſer ſins; *Verily I ſay unto you, that the Publicans and Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.* Meer civil men need more humbling, in ſome reſpects, than groſſer ſinners, becauſe they have more to be proud of. It's ſelf-liking and ſelf-flattering that keeps a man upon his own bottom.

Matth. 21. 31.

And as a man is prone to like himſelf, ſo to ſeek himſelf is at the end of all his actions; whether he pray, or preach, or hear, or confer, or trade, or eat, &c. ſelf is his bias: And as proud man ſeeks himſelf, ſo he is ſelf-depending; he lays the ſtreſs of duties on his parts, and the ſtreſs of reforming any ſin upon his own purpoſes and reſolutions, and his ſucceſſes upon his own worth or wiſdom.

To this the Lord ſaw the Children of *Iſrael* to be inclined,——*leſt Iſrael vaunt themſelves againſt me, ſaying, Mine own hand hath ſaved me.* See the reaſoning between *Joſhua* and *Iſrael* in *Joſh.* 24. 19, 21. *Ye cannot ſerve the Lord, for he is a holy God, he is a jealous God. Nay, but we will ſerve the Lord.* There is a tang of this in the ſpirits of godly perſons; for alas, how ſeldom do they act grace, or in duty ſo, as conſidering that God muſt help the acts of grace, as well as give the habits? But for natural men, the Lord may ſay to them as to *Edom, The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, thou haſt caſt of God, and relied on thine own ſtrength.*

Judg. 7. 2.

Iſa. 49. 16.

Fourth-

Fourthly, Paſſion and peeviſhneſs in the nature of man begets prejudices againſt God: As natural men cannot pleaſe God, ſo God cannot pleaſe them. There is ſomething of this leaven in God's own people, and the moſt eminent of them: *David* was *diſpleaſed*, becauſe the Lord had made a breach upon *Uzzah*: and *Jonas* was *exceedingly diſpleaſed* that the Lord ſpared *Nineveh*. *Reaſ.* 4. 2 Sam. 6. 8. Jonah 4. 1.

It cannot be ſaid of God and his people, as it was of *David* and his, 2 *Sam.* 3. *Whatſoever the King did, it pleaſed the people*; nay too often, much of that that we vent in prayer, or under the name of prayer, is but paſſion, and the effect of a feveriſh diſtemper on our ſpirits. Obſerve what is written of *Jonah* in this caſe, *It diſpleaſed* Jonah *exceedingly*: And he was very angry, angry in prayer: he was very angry, and he prayed unto the Lord, and ſaid, *I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my ſaying when I was in my Countrey* —— What was this praying, but the vent of humane paſſion unto prejudice againſt God? Yea, and which was much, he juſtified himſelf in it to the face of God. *Jonah*, ſaith God, *doſt thou well to be angry? and he ſaid, I do well to be angry unto death.* Jonah 4. 9.

Fifthly, The natural wilfulneſs and rebellion of man is the cauſe why he will leave God, and be at his own finding and diſpoſe; man would not ſubmit to God: *As for the word that thou haſt ſpoken to us in the Name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee, but we will certainly do whatſoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth* —— *Reaſ.* 5. Jer. 44. 16, 17.

There hath been a conteſt between God's Will and mans, from mans beginning, and ſo is to this day. God layeth all the wickedneſs of man upon Gen. 3.

Psal. 81. 11. his own rebellious will; *Israel would have none of*
Joh. 5. 40. *me.* And so did Christ the Jews unbelief; *ye will*
not come to me that ye might have life: And *how*
often would I, and ye would not? Matth. 23. 27. O
the rebellion of the Clay against the Potter! the A-
postle hints it in the Ninth Chapter to the *Romans.*
Many a man will damn himself, rather than he will
submit himself to the will of God; *What is the Al-*
Job 21. 15. *mighty that we should serve him?*

How do men say in Prayer, *Lord, thy will be*
done, and yet in their practice contend with God for
their own? Those Jews were not alone in this, *Jer.*
18. 12. *We will walk after our own devices, and*
we will every man do the imagination of his own
evil heart. The Prodigal Son would have his por-
tion from his Father into his own hands, that he
might have his own will.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Wherein Application of the foregoing Doctrine is made in ſeveral Uſes.

WE have already ſeen the inclination and luſting deſire that is in man to forſake God, and the Reaſons of it: I ſhall now proceed to apply the conſideration hereof in the following Uſes. And

Uſe 1. This informs us of the ſinfulneſs of man's nature, yea of the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin in man. For as the School-men ſay, Sin is a turning from God to the Creature, chiefly to a man's ſelf, and his own Will.

But the truth is, ſin is more than this; it is a deſpiſing of God, it makes men ſpeak againſt God; *The people ſpake againſt God:* to turn their ſpirits Num. 21. 5. againſt God; to multiply words againſt God; to Job 15. 13. ſpeak *marvellous things againſt the God of Gods*, Job 34. 37. *Dan.* 11. 36. The Serpents words to the woman at firſt ſtick to us ſtill, *Ye ſhall be as Gods*—— And if God ſhould let men have their own way and wiſhes, he would ſoon loſe himſelf in the world: wicked men would turn God out of the world, as Pſal. 10. 4. well as out of their thoughts. And wherefore? man would be God of this world, as well as the Devil. 2 Cor. 4. 4. Men are naturally Polytheiſts, for many Gods. Some make *their belly their God*, *Phil.* 3. 10. others make ſilver and gold their God; *They praiſed the* Dan. 5. 23.

Gods of ſilver and gold; yea to make Devils their Gods, *they ſacrificed to Devils, Deut.* 32. 17. to make their own Luſts their Gods, ——*ſerving di-*
Tit. 3. *vers luſts*—— Man would have any Gods rather than the true God; but eſpecially he is inclined to make a God of himſelf. That *ye ſhall be as Gods*, pleaſed our firſt Parents well. Man would have the diſpoſing of his Eſtate in his own hand: he thinks he can do better for himſelf than God does.

As *Alphonſo* of *Spain* ſaid, as ſtory reports, That if he had been of God's Counſel at the Creation, ſome things ſhould have been better contrived. Ah thinks many a man with himſelf, and in his heart, If I had but my life, and health, and ſtrength, and whole condition in my own power, then I ſhould be a happy man. Thus is man in the fall, fallen from God to himſelf, and would be what himſelf would. When God will have him poor, he would be rich; and when God will have him low, he would be high: If it were in his power, almoſt nothing ſhould be with him as it is, or as it is in the world.

2 Sam. 15. Moſt men would be Rulers in the world; *O that I were made Judge in the land*, ſaith *Abſolom. Peter*
Luke 9. 33. would live upon Mount *Tabor*, *Maſter it is good for us to be here, let us make three Tabernacles*—— How many have diſpatched Princes and Popes out of the world, that their ſelves might be in their places? Thoſe that are called *Fifth-Monarchy men* had need take heed of this Leaven; two of Chriſt's own Diſciples aſpired to ſit one at Chriſt's right
Matth. 20. Luke 22. 24. hand, and the other on his left in his Kingdom; and all of them ſought for the preheminence, and that in a *Kingdom in this world, Acts* 2. 6. Some
1 Cor. 6. men would judge the World and Angels before the time.

time. Oh how eager is our nature to be freed from God's will, and left to our own? then things ſhould not only be altered in the World, but in the Word of God; the holy Scriptures themſelves ſhould come under an *Index Expurgatorius*, we ſee it at *Rome*; much of the Commandments, Threatnings, and Decrees of God ſhould be blotted out: Men would be without the Word of God, or above it, as the *Pope* and *Church of Rome* preſume to be. Our Saviour told the Phariſees and Scribes, That for the Commandments of God they had obtruded the Traditions of men, and that *they made the word of God of none effect by their Traditions.* Mark 7.8,13. Yea, there are more than *Antiochus Epiphanes*, that would do what they will, and exalt themſelves, and magnifie themſelves above every God. Dan.11. O how are men beholding to God for his reſtraining grace? It's a mercy to men, that they are not what they would be, and that he keeps many of their unruly inclinations dormant.

This informs us of the power and excellency of Goſpel grace, that hath begun to deſtroy this vileneſs of our corrupt nature, and will in time ſwallow it up into victory: Grace at length will be the deſtruction of this evil humour of leaving God, and cleaving to our ſelves; the Conqueſt will be graduall, as *Joſhua*'s was over the Natives of *Canaan*. *Uſe* 2.

Believers would keep their ſtation under God, they are much outed of themſelves, and out of conceit with themſelves; *In me (that is in my fleſh) dwelleth no good thing.* Rom.7.18. God is their all, and they are all for God: God is their hope, and *God is the ſtrength of their hearts, and their portion for ever;* Pſal.39. Pſal.73.26. *the deſire of their ſoul is to him*, Iſa.26.8.

They

They hide not themſelves from God, as *Adam* did, nor can they bear God's hiding himſelf from them; *they ſet the Lord always before them*, as the Lord ſets them alway *before his face*. They go not out of God's preſence, as *Cain* did, but as earneſtly deſire it, as *Moſes* did. They get and keep as near God as they can; *It is good for me to draw near to God.*

Pſal.16. Pſal.41.12. Exod.33. Pſal.73.

Grace makes a man deſirous to be *in ſubjection to the Father of Spirits*; to be at his diſpoſing; to begin to ſpeak like Jeſus Chriſt; *yet not my will, but thine be done:* Grace hath always brought men to this ſpirit and temper, *good is the word of the Lord, Iſa. 39. ult. It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good.* If he ſay thus, *I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do to me as ſeemeth good to him.* When God gave *Aaron* moſt heavy blows, *Aaron held his peace.* The Saints can do thus often, and they would always do thus; they pray, and ſtrive to do ſo, and grieve when they cannot: They have indeed, they have great wreſtlings with temptations to the contrary, yet their conflicts end in conqueſts.

1 Sam.3.18. 2 Sam.15.26. Lev.10.3.

The Viper may ſtick a while on *Paul's* hand, but he ſhakes it off again, and without any hurt. There is a great difference between a Saints *temptations* and his *reſolutions*. The holy Pſalmiſt was tempted to leave God and godlineſs; *Verily I have cleanſed my heart in vain;*—— here was his temptation, but what was his reſolution? to the contrary; he abhorr'd the temptation, and himſelf too, where he indulged it in the leaſt. *If I ſay I will ſpeak thus, behold I ſhould offend againſt the generation of thy Children: ſo fooliſh was I, and ignorant, I was as*

Acts 28. Pſal.73.13,14, 15,22,28.

as a beast before thee; but it is good for me to draw near to God. And here is the power and excellency of the grace of God in men; it would have men at God's disposing, and not their own.

This may exhort us to quicken this principle of grace into operation; else sin that dwelleth in us, will make us weak as other men, as *Sampson* was, when he had lost his Nazrarites locks. If we take not heed, and great heed, there is a wisdome of the flesh that will beguile us, as the Serpent did *Eve*. Our lusts are deceitful lusts, *Eph.*5.22. they are not dead, though they be dying; they are dead as to their dominion in all the Saints, but as to operation, in none; if we watch not, one or other of them will steal away our hearts from God, as *Absolom* did many of the peoples from *David*. O take heed ye set not up any Idol in your hearts; we are inclined to it by nature, and these will estrange us from God. *Use* 3. Judg.16. 2 Sam.15. Ezek.14.3,4,5.

And let us take heed what we ask of God: this Prodigal Son would needs have his Portion out of his Fathers hand into his own: Yea, St. *James* and *John* asked unfitting things of Jesus, to *sit one on his right hand, and the other on his left in his Kingdom*. And again, they asked of him power, as *Elias* had, to command fire from Heaven upon the Village that slighted Jesus Christ; an evil spirit that Jesus rebuked in them, *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of*. And in the same Chapter, *Peter* asked of Christ that he might dwell with him, and *Moses*, and *Elias*, in the Mount where he was transfigured. And all his Disciples had an itch to have ruled with him in the Kingdom of *Israel*, when he was risen from the dead. Mark 10. 37. Luke 9.54. v.55. 1 Pet.6.

O

O my Brethren, it is good that God deny us what we ſometimes ask; we ask things for our own turns,
1 Kings 3. without reference to his. Did we ask, as *Solomon* did, Wiſdom, for God's ſake more than his own, we ſhould not be denied.

The Lord knows what it is to give much into our hands, ſince he truſted *Adam* with his whole Portion in his; yet this is in our nature to ſeek, as we ſee in this Son, *Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.* But the Lord knoweth that we cannot manage, or bear ſo much as we would have, as our Saviour ſaid to his Diſciples, *I have many*
John 16.12. *things to ſay unto you, but ye cannot bear them now*; and therefore he hath taken another courſe with us, to take us off of ſelf, and from ſtanding on our own bottoms. He hath put all our Portion into other hands, into better and ſafer hands than our own,
Col. 1.19. even into Chriſt's; *It pleaſed the Father, that all*
John 3.35. *fulneſs ſhould dwell in him*; and *the Father hath given all things into the Sons hands.* So that now we muſt have all from Chriſt, and not all at once, but
Eph. 4.7. *according to the meaſure of the gift of Chriſt*, and as we are able to bear and uſe it.

We muſt have all ſpiritual life from Chriſt, *he is*
Col. 3.4. *our life*; and we muſt have all our righteouſneſs
Jer. 23.6. from Chriſt, inherent and imputed, *he is the Lord our righteouſneſs*; and we muſt have all our ſpiritual
Phil. 4.13. ſtrength from Chriſt, *I can do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth me.*

And we muſt have our temporals from Chriſt as
Matth. 28. well as ſpirituals; *All power in heaven and earth is given unto him*: we can have nothing from God,
2 Cor. 4.6. but through the hands of Chriſt; *The light of the knowledge of the glory of God muſt ſhine into our hearts*

hearts through the face of Jesus Christ. It's *from his fulneſs that we all have received, and grace for grace.* Our acceſs to God, and acceptance with him, is by him. The holy Scriptures dwell much on this point: God is reſolved to take his Children off from ſelf-depending and ſelf-diſpoſing, and thereby from ſelf-aſcribing: *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give glory: Of thine own have we given thee*, ſaith *David* of his and his people's freewill Offerings. John 1. 16. Eph. 1. 6. and 3. 12. Pſal. 11. 1. 1 Chro. 29. 14.

God will give all, and have all again; as the Sea feeds the Rivers, and the Rivers return again into the Sea. *Lord, thou haſt wrought all our works in us. It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure.* And truly it is needful that we be kept off from ſelf-weening, and that we be kept low. What we have in Grace and Comfort, that we have it by little and little, as *Iſrael* had the poſſeſſion of *Canaan.* A little at a time is fitteſt for us, as the Mother does by her little Children. Eccleſ. 2. Iſa. 26. 12. 2 Phil. 1. 3.

God gives Grace to his own people with abatements as to their deſires; and when he gives them any great things, uſeth to do it with repercuſſives, to draw back the humour of Pride they are in danger of. When he gave St. *Paul abundance of revelations*, he forthwith gave him *a thorn in the fleſh, a meſſenger of Satan to buffet him, leſt he ſhould be exalted above meaſure.* And therefore when God at any time ſhews you great things, expect a thorn in the fleſh to hide Pride from you. *Note.* 2 Cor. 12. 7.

God leaves his people ſometimes to themſelves to let them know of what ill conſequence it is to be

2 Chron. 32. of themſelves; ſo he did by good *Hezekiah*, who found the ill effect in the caſe. Oh let us be afraid to be left to our ſelves, to our own will, or wiſdome, or ſtrength, or deſires, eſpecially to our own luſts.

It was to *Iſrael* ſorrow, that God gave them Pſal. 106. 15. their requeſts; and *when he gave them up to their* Pſal. 81. 12. *own hearts luſts, and to walk in their own counſels.* If we ſhould be at our own diſpoſe, and have our own will of God, as this younger Son had of his Father, it would be our ruin; and what was Hoſ. 13. 9. ſaid to *Iſrael* would be ſaid to us, *O Iſrael, thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf.*

Many Children, if they be let alone, will eat Coals and Clay, yea, and Ratsbane for Sugar; and ſo fooliſh and ignorant are God's own Children Pſal. 73. 22. ſometimes, in a time of temptation, as *Aſaph* confeſſed of himſelf; and good *Agur*, *Surely I am* Prov. 30. 2. *more brutiſh than any man, and have not the underſtanding of a man.*

Fourthly. I cannot but take up a Lamentation for poor man, that he is ſuch an altered Creature from his original. God made man a companion for himſelf, as he did the woman for the man; though he needed not man's ſociety as *Adam* did *Eves*: Gen. 1. 26. Therefore he made man in his own Image, and 1 Cor. 11. 7. after his own likeneſs, as he did the womans to the man's.

But man hath loſt his likeneſs and his love to God together: Man naturally cares not for God's company; he hides himſelf from God, or would if he could, as *Adam* did; and goes out of the preſence of God, as *Cain.*

Jonah 1. 3. Such a man as *Jonah went out of the preſence of*

the

the Lord. It is natural to man to go a whoring from God as *Iſrael* did; *I have loved ſtrangers, and after them will I go; and we will come no more unto thee.* Hoſ. 4.12. Jer. 2.25,31.

Man is not ſatisfied with one God, but makes many Gods to himſelf, and himſelf the chiefeſt; *According to the number of thy Cities are thy Gods, O Judah.* And ſo may it be ſaid to every natural man, according to the number of thy Luſts ſo are thy Gods: An adulterous man is not ſatisfied with one woman, nor the adulterous woman with one man; ſo is not a natural heart ſatisfied with one God. O what a ſtrange Creature is man ſince the fall.! Truly the Daughters of *Iſrael* did not more ſolemnly lament the Daughter of *Jephta*, than we ſhould our natural diſpoſition to caſt off God, and to be as Gods our ſelves; the whole Creation groans under this grievous Diſtemper of ours, and how little ſenſe have we of it our ſelves? This is for a lamentation, and ſhall be for a lamentation. v. 28.

Fifthly. Laſtly, Let us all make obſervation of our own ſpirits in this point: There is a difference in the ſpirits of the godly themſelves in the caſe. Some are more carnal, and walk as men, as it was with ſome of the *Corinthians*; others are more ſpiritual, and walk as Saints indeed. Natural men *like not to retain God in their knowledge*, nor in their thoughts: They are weary of his preſence, *Job* 21.14. and weary of his ſervice; *what a wearineſs is it?* weary of thoſe that are like to God, as the *Sodomites were of Lot.* The *Gergeſenes* wiſhed Jeſus himſelf *to depart out of their Coaſts.* 1 Cor. 3. Rom. 1.28. Pſal. 10.4. Mal. 1.13. Matth. 8.34.

But there is another ſpirit in the truly godly, their deſire is to *ſet the Lord always before them.* To live with him, to live upon him. They would not be at liberty from God's Commands, nor from his Government, nor from his Diſpoſing. They are afraid to be left to themſelves.

Pſal. 16.8. Pſal. 42. 1. Lam. 3. 24. Pſal. 27.7.

Now obſerve your own ſpirits how like you are to theſe, and how unlike the other: If you have Grace, the tendency of your Soul is towards God, and not from him. *With my ſoul have I deſired thee in the night; yea, with my ſpirit within me will I ſeek thee early.* The corruption of nature cries, Divide the heart between God and thy Luſts, and between God and other things, as that Harlot cry'd, *Divide the Child*: But Grace votes for God to have the whole heart; *with my whole heart have I ſought thee.*

Iſa. 26.9. 2 Kings 3. Pſal. 119. 10.

When therefore any hard thoughts ariſe in thee of God, look upon the Fleſh, and that unclean Spirit the Devil, to joyn in the evil motion. Satan would perſwade others beſides *Job* to curſe God; he will inſinuate and ſuggeſt to you after the manner of *Abſolom* to *Huſhai*, *Is this thy kindneſs to thy friend*? So will Satan ſeek to make thy heart ſecretly to reproach God when thou art under hard diſpenſations of Providence by himſelf, or by harſh and cruel men; Is this God's kindneſs to his friends, to let them be ſo harſhly dealt with?

Job 2. 2 Sam. 16. 17.

I, but lay things together, and wiſely conſider of God's doings, as the Pſalmiſt ſaid, and then you will ſay, *Yet God is good to every one that is of a clean heart.* O take heed of making any ill reflexions on God, either on his Word, or Works, or Decrees,

Pſal. 64.9. Pſal. 73. 1.

Decrees, or Attributes; this is the way to be tempted to leave God, and ſtand upon your own bottoms, as this Prodigal did; Give me my portion of Goods, and I'le be gone. I, but what follows? This leads to the ſecond Particular, Point or Doctrine,

That mens leaving and caſting off God's Government to live of themſelves, and to be at their own diſpoſe, is the cauſe of very much ſin and ſorrow in their lives. Of which in the following Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Wherein follows the Second general Doctrine resulting from the First Part of the Parable: shewing both the sinful and miserable consequences of mens forsaking of God. The gross mistake of most men herein; and the Means to be used for prevention.

I Have finished the first general Doctrine from the first part of the Parable, *viz.* That every man by nature hath a lusting desire to leave God, to stand upon his own legs, and to be at his own disposal. Let us now see the sad effects hereof in the second general Doctrine, *viz.* That mens leaving and casting off God's Government, to live of themselves, and to be at their own dispose, is the cause of very much sin and sorrow in their lives.

This was the younger Son's case in this Parable, he leaves his Father, and is led by his own Lusts, and at last comes to great penury and drudgery; he kept Swine, and eat with them too; he fed them, and fed of the same meat with them, and at length could not get that; he would gladly have filled his belly

belly with the Husks which the Swine did eat, but could not get them.

It's to be observed, that his first step to happiness was his thoughts of returning to his Fathers house; and his first step to misery was his leaving his Father. And thus it is with every man that waves the will of God, as to his Rule, and follows his own. It is his undoing, he now becomes a man of sin and sorrow, as *to leave father and mother, &c.* for God, is the way to be a blessed man or woman; as it was said of *Levi*, who said to his Father and to his Mother, *I have not seen him* —— Deut. 33. 9, 11. And what followeth? *Bless Lord his substance, and accept the work of his hands, and strike through the loyns of them that rise against him.* So to leave God, and follow our selves or men, it is the high way to sin and sorrow.

If they forsake me, I will forsake them, and many evils and troubles shall befall them. When those Jews in the 42. and 43. of *Jeremiah* rejected the Word of the Lord for their stay in their own Country, and would go down into *Egypt*, they there perished miserably. Deut. 32. 16, 17.

And when *Jonah* fled from the presence of the Lord, he met with a rough Sea, and was cast into it, and swallowed *into the belly of hell.* And what a deluge of sin and sorrow did *Adam* bring upon the World by casting off the will of God, and following his own? God said eat not; he would eat: this brought him and all the World under sin and misery, and the whole Creation into a groaning state. Jonah 2. 2. Rom. 5. 12. and 8. 22.

Quest.

posing of us, as *Joseph* was at the manner of his Father's blessing his two Sons; and the Reason is
Gen. 48. 17. 2 Cor. 5. 7. because we pass a Judgment on God's disposals by sight, and not by faith: Now sight is a false Medium to take a view of Providence by, which is much more the object of faith, as the Creation is; *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* A Staff that is streight when looked on through the air, seems crooked if looked on in the water.

But I come to speak to the two Branches of the Doctrine, That to cast off God, and follow self, leads men into abundance of sin and sorrow. Into abundance of sin: It's a notorious inlet to sin; it pulls up the sluces and floodgates of wickedness, and brings in a deluge of sin and ungodliness.

I.

For 1. it's certain that the knowledge of God, and acquaintance with him, is the only sufficient barr against sin. *Joseph's* acquaintance with God was his preservation against the importunate temptation of his Mistress; *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? The servants of former Governours bare rule over the people,* that is, used their pleasure on them, *but so did not I,* saith *Nehemiah, because of the fear of God.* To have God much and aright in our thoughts, is a forcible Caveat against all sin: As it is a powerful barr, so it is an universal barr against sin; it keeps from all sorts of sin, because all sin is against God. When a man so knows God, as to reverence him in his thoughts, and to close with his will, this is both a powerful and universal barr to sin.

Gen. 39. 9. Neh. 5. 15.

A

A man's reaſon and parts, and his natural Conſcience, may be a fence againſt ſome ſins, but not all; there are ſins that any of theſe Hedges will let in: Nothing is a ſufficient fence againſt all ſin, but a holy aw of God; *Stand in aw, and ſin not.* Pſal. 4. 4. The Devil cannot eaſily tempt to ſin where the Word of God is *hid in the heart*; thus ſaith S. *John* Pſal. 119. 11. to thoſe young men 1 *John* 2. 14. *I write unto you young men, becauſe ye are ſtrong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

They ſhall all know me, and I will cauſe them to walk in my ſtatutes, are links in the Covenant of Grace; and therefore thoſe that live in any known ſin, may conclude they know not God with a New Covenant knowledge.

And again, as a man's reaſon and parts, or natural Conſcience may be curbs from ſome ſins, ſo may ſhame from others, but theſe are only outſide ſins; for ſhame is no barr againſt ſins within doors. Luſts may ſwarm there; there may be iniquity and hypocriſie to the full within, notwithſtanding the thing we call ſhame.

There are no bounds againſt ſins within doors, but an holy aw of God, and his holy Word; a ſetting theſe always before us, as *David* did. But Pſal. 16. 8. Pſal. 10. 4. when men put God from their thoughts and minds, as thoſe Profeſſors of wiſdome among the Gentiles did, of whom the Apoſtle ſpeaks in *Rom.* 1. 22, 28. *As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do thoſe things which are not convenient.*---I ſay, when men caſt God out from their minds, then they ſin with the greateſt freedom: *Our lips are our*

Pſal. 12. 4. *own, who is Lord over us? There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will*
Jer. 18. 12. *every one do the imaginations of his evil heart.* This is the firſt demonſtration of men's leaving God to be the inlet to ſin, becauſe there is no powerful and univerſal barr to ſin, but a reverend, hearty, and experimental knowledge of, and acquaintance with God.

2. Becauſe ſuch as leave God are left of God to
Pſal. 81. 11, 12. their own luſts: *My people would not hearken to my voice, and Iſrael would none of me: ſo I gave them up unto their own hearts luſts.* When men caſt off the true God, he caſts them under the pow-
1 Kings 22. er of a lying Spirit, as he did *Ahab's* Prophets: *The fool hath ſaid in his heart there is no God.* Obſerve
Pſal. 14. 2. what follows, *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.* Thus for the Reaſons of the firſt Branch.

2. The Reaſons of the ſecond Branch of the Doctrine, That mens leaving God lets in upon them abundance of ſorrow. When *Cain* went out of the preſence of God, he was a man of fears, and a ter-
Jer. 20. rour to himſelf, as *Paſhur* was; *I ſhall be a fugi-*
Gen. 4. 14. *tive, and a vagabond in the earth; and it ſhall come to paſs, that every one that findeth me ſhall ſlay me.* The reaſon of this is,

1. Becauſe God will fill a man with his own ways, *Prov.* 1. 30. *They would none of my counſel, therefore ſhall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.* The Prodigal had enough of his farr Countrey, and the Children of *Iſrael* of the Fleſh they luſted after: *He*
Gal. 6. 8. *that ſoweth to the fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap cor-*
Hoſ. 8. 7. *ruption: They have ſown the wind, and they ſhall reap*

reap the whirlwind. That is a plain Text in the case in the Prophet *Isaiah*; *Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass your selves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled: this shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.* Isa. 50. 11.

2. In this case God observes the Law of Retaliation; *Eye for eye, tooth for tooth*—— Where men cast off God, he will cast off them; here is the Law of Retaliation. Thus said *David* on his Death-bed to his Son *Solomon*, *If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. With the froward thou wilt shew thy self froward, Psal.* 18. 26. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, Jer.* 2. 16. And what says *Jonah* by dear experience? *They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies.* *Jonah* thought to have found safety in going from the presence of the Lord, but this involv'd him in such dangers as he never knew before; he fell into the *belly of hell.* This was also the case of *Saul* when he *rejected the Lord*, in rejecting his word; *The Lord rejected him from being King*; yea, *the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an Evil Spirit from the Lord terrified him.* Yea, when *Solomon* sought happiness out of God, all his findings were *vanity and vexation of spirit.* Whenever we forsake the *fountain of living water*, we *hew out Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no water, Jer.* 2. 13. Exod. 21. 24. 1 Chron. 28. 9. Jonah 2. 8. 1 Sam. 15. 23. and 16. 14.

Application.

1. This shews us the gross and grievous mistake, I would I might not say of most men, to call that their happiness which is indeed their misery, that is to be loose from God and his Word, and to be tied to their own wills, and led by their own lusts. O how many think it a fine World when they can say, Psal. 12. *Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?* Men think this a mercy, but the Lord deliver me from such mercy, said St. *Bernard*. That which men think their mercy, is their misery.

It is better for us that God hedge up our way with thorns, *i. e.* with difficulties and distresses, than let us take our own way, and run wild, as we are by nature; for Jer. 2. 24. *man is a wild Ass, used to the Wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure.* If God did not hedge up mens way, they would be mostly upon the Devil's Commons: For- 2 Tim. 2. 26. sake God, and the God of this World hath you in his paws, and at his will.

Psal. 119. 115. Whilst a man is farr from God, Salvation is farr from him; yea, the further any man's thoughts and desires, and cares are from God, the nearer Satan is to that man to enter into him, as he did into *Judas*. For if Satan will get to a man's *right hand* Zach. 3. 2. when he *stands before the Lord*, as he did to *Joshua* the Jews High Priest, he will get into his heart when he is out of God's presence.

We

We read in *Job* 1.6. how Satan got among the holy Angels when they preſented themſelves before the Lord; (not that Satan comes into Heaven; for God and his holy Angels may be there where Satan may alſo be; in the air, or upon the earth: It is a ſimilitude from earthly Kings;) how much more may Satan joyn himſelf to men that are at a diſtance from God? when their thoughts and minds are remote from God, than Satan is nigh them to influence them, and to be a *lying Spirit* to them, and in them, as he was in *Ahab's Prophets*; he ſhews them happineſs and pleaſure in doing their own wills and luſts, which proves but a cheat, like Juglers tricks. Job 1.6. 1 Kings 22. Pſal. 10.4. 1 Kings 22.22.

That day wherein a man is a ſtranger to God, is a day of Errors, and a day of Terrors in the conception, if not in the birth: It's thought a fine thing for every man to do *that which is right in his own eyes.* If men might do what they would, and have what they liſt, without check from God's Word and their own Conſcience, O this would be a brave World with many men! but alas, this will be to them as abundance of fleſh was to *Iſrael, leanneſs to their Souls*; this ſweet meat would be ſawced with the wrath of God, as the *Quails* were; and the ſweetneſs of their own luſts would be to them as abhorring as *Tamar* was to *Amnon*; and as meat on which a man ſurfeits. Judges 17.6. Pſal. 116.15. Num. 11.33. 2 Sam. 13.15.

So that it's a thouſand times better to have our judgments, reaſon, wills, and affections under God's command and power then our own: It's infinitely better to abide with God, than to be looſe from him in any of our faculties or ways. God never did any man hurt that ſet his heart upon him; but all other

other things do; yea, they undo us when we set
Isa. 55.2. our hearts upon them; we now *spend our money for that which is not bread; and our labour for that which sufficeth not.*

O then, if ever you will do your selves good,
Job 22. 21. acquaint your selves much with God. A man acquainted with God, need not say as many do, *Who*
Psal.4.6. *will shew us any good?* For God saith to him what
Exod.33.19. he did to *Moses*, *I will make all my goodness pass before thee.* Remember *Samuel*'s words to *Israel*, 1 *Sam.* 12. 21. *Turn ye not aside from the Lord, for then should ye go after vain things which cannot profit, for they are vain.*

All your projects and contrivances for content out
Hos.9.14. of God's way, will be but as *miscarrying wombs, and dry breasts.* You may sometimes conceit that God deals hardly with you, worse then with wic-
Psal.73.12,13. ked men, as *Asaph* under a temptation did, and as *Job* did, *Job* 10. 3. but these good men eat their words, and recall'd their error; *So foolish was I,*
Job 42.3. *and ignorant*, said the one; *I have uttered that which I understood not*, says the other. Doubtless God's worst is better than the World's best, or Satan's best, or the Flesh's best. God's worst will turn it self
Exod.3. 3,4. into good, as the Serpent, *Moses* was afraid of, presently turned into a Rod in his hand.

But the Devil's best turns to the greatest evil;
Gen. 3. *Adam* and *Eve* found it so: He pleased them when he told them *they should be as Gods*, but they presently saw *they were naked.* And so the World's *best*, when the heart is set upon the World, turns
Eccles. 1, & 2. into *vanity and vexation of spirit*; so *Solomon* found it. And the *best* of self proves as bad. When *Jonah* would wave God's Call, and follow his own hu-

humour, he learnt by ſad experience, and dear bought, that *they that obſerve lying vanities, forſake their own mercies:* He went from the preſence of God to ſave himſelf, but he loſt himſelf firſt in the Sea, and then in the belly of Hell. Jonah 2. 8.

Uſe 2. If to depart from God and his Government, to be at our own diſpoſe, be the inlet to ſin and miſery, then take heed of ſuch ſins as cauſe your departing from God. And what ſins are theſe?

Firſt, Ignorance of God, of his worth and excellency; ignorance of his Allſufficiency, when men profeſs an unknown God, as St. *Paul* ſaw in *Athens* an Altar *to the unknown God:* Now their ſpirits ſit looſe from God; they have no great affections for him, nor do they much ſtand in aw of him, but ſin with liberty and liking; *They proceed from evil to evil; for they know not me, ſaith the Lord.* Acts 7.13. Ignoti nulla cupido. Jer. 9. 3.

Mens ignorance of God's Attributes, and Word, and Works becomes ſin to them, as *Jeroboam's* Calves at *Dan* and *Bethel* did to *Iſrael.* And Ignorance of God becomes mens miſery too, as is ſaid of the people whom the King of *Aſſyria* placed in the Cities of *Samaria*, that *becauſe they knew not the manner of the God of the Land, therefore he ſent Lions among them, and they ſlew them; becauſe they knew not the manner of the God of the Land.* 2 Kings 12. 13. 2 Kings 17. 26.

2. Unbelief is a ſin that makes men to depart from God. *Take heed Brethren, leſt there be in any of you an heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.* Unbelief is the ground of mens drawing back from God. *Iſraels* unbelief in the Wilderneſs made them change their God into a golden Calve; their unbelief cauſed a double caſt- Hebr. 3. 12. ἀπιστία & ἀποστασία ſunt cognata.

ing off; they cast off God, and God casts off them; and the Land of *Canaan* would not receive them,

Heb. 3. 19. *So then they could not enter in because of unbelief.* As Faith is the grace of union between God and Men, so Unbelief is the sin of separation.

3. Spiritual Pride makes us leave God, and God us.

Psal. 10. 4. Psal. 138. 6. *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts:* and so *God beholds the proud afar off.*

Isa. 57. 15. God keeps at a distance from a proud heart; his abode is with the humble spirit, but the proud man dwells by himself: Self-depending, and self-seeking, and self-ascribing, are the Idols of a proud heart, and keep God out of that his Chair of State.

O take heed then of the poyson that corrupt nature extracts from good parts, from moral vertues, and from great priviledges; these are very good and desirable in themselves, but through man's corrupt nature, there is a poyson that follows them; as the Bee has a sting as well as honey: And this poyson is our aptness to settle on our own bottoms, and to think of our selves above what is meet, as

Acts 2. 9. *Simon Magus* gave out that himself was *some great one.*

2 Cor. 12. St. *Paul* himself was in this danger, *to be exalted through the abundance of revelations.* They drive the heat inward, they draw a man's eye too much on himself, and so keep him at a distance from God, which becomes a Snare to him, as *Gideon's*

Judges 8. 27. Ephod did to him, and to his House.

Simile. As a man's Castle or Fort, well furnished with Ammunition and Provision, is a good defence against an Enemy; but if he keep it against his Prince, it may prove his ruin: Thus a mans parts and gifts

and

and priviledges, may render him uſeful many ways; but if once they draw his eye off from God to ſelf, to ſelf-eſteem and ſelf-applauſe, he'l depend little on God, and aſcribe little to him; and ſo they are his undoing.

It was ſelf-righteouſneſs that kept the Jews off from Chriſt, and the Scribes and Phariſees from ſenſe of their ſinfulneſs, and ſorrow for it. Parts and moral Vertues, and a fair outward Carriage do often prove as great an impediment to the receiving of Chriſt, and the free Grace of God, as groſs ſins, and ſometimes greater. A man that is full of ſelf has no room for God; as a Glaſs that is full of clear water will hinder the pouring Wine into it, as much as a Glaſs full of Water that is muddy.

Laſtly, If you would not leave God, and his Government, and diſpoſal of you, get his New-Covenant-fear into your heart, and keep it there. *I will put my fear into their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me.* This, I ſay this fear of God in the heart of man will link man to God faſter than *Ruth* to *Naomi*, or *Jonathan* to *David*. Jer. 32. 40.

Queſt. But what is this New-Covenant-fear of God in a man's heart?

Anſw. It is ſuch a reverend and high eſteem of God, through inward acquaintance with him, and his Laws in our minds and hearts, as makes us, we will leave any thing rather than God: as *Abrahams* fear of God, ſuch fear as is here ſpoken of, made him leave his native Countrey and Kindred to follow God. O feel this fear of God in your hearts, and it will be impoſſible to part you and God: Be his preſent diſpenſations towards you never ſo ſharp, you'l cling to him, as the Child does to the Mother Gen. 12.

Job 13. 15. when ſhe chides it; *Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him.*

And let your outward condition be never ſo low, yea, and your parts never ſo mean, that men *ſee no* Cant. 7. 10. *form or comlineſs in you, why they ſhould deſire you:* yet Chriſt's deſire will be towards you; and God's Heb. 13. 5. Soul is knit to yours ſo, that he will *never never leave you nor forſake you.* Be but poor within as well as without, and God will have your Company to Iſa. 66. 2. chooſe; *To this man will I look that is poor, and of a* Iſa. 57. 15. *contrite ſpirit. I dwell in the high and holy place, with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit.* And ſo much for the ſecond general Doctrine taught us in this firſt part of the Parable.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Wherein is ſhewed, That God gives to every man a Portion to be improved: together with the Reaſons for his ſo doing, from that particular Clauſe of the 12*th. Verſe,*

And he divided his Living unto them.

HAVING done with the two general Doctrines from this firſt part of the Parable; I ſhall now proceed to thoſe which reſult from the ſeveral Clauſes thereof; beginning with that in the end of the 12*th.* Verſe, wherein the Father of theſe two Sons acts his firſt part, *viz.*

And he divided unto them his living.

The Greek word βίος ſignifies *life*; it is tranſlated ſo in 1 *Tim.* 2. 2. ——*that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life*—— Sometimes the word ſignifieth *livelyhood*, or *living* or *eſtate*, *Luke* 8.43 ——*which had ſpent all her living upon Phyſicians*, or all her livelyhood or eſtate: So that this Father

ἡσύχιον βίον.

ὅλον τὸν βίον.

ther divided his eſtate or goods to them; he gave them their portions. Now the Doctrine from the words is this:

Doctrine. *That God gives men, even natural and ſinful men, a portion, and leaves them to improve it.*

The Father gave his younger Son a portion, and left him to husband it. The wicked and ſlothful ſervant had a Talent put into his hands by his Lord: Chriſt *giveth gifts* to men to improve, *even to the rebellious*, Pſal. 68. 18.

Matth. 25. 15. Eph. 4.

The Heathen have their Talents: Firſt, They have the light of Nature within them; they have a natural Divinity, whereby they know God, and much good and evil: ——— *having not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law:* They have excuſing and accuſing Conſciences.

Κοιναὶ ἐννοίαι, Common parts. Rom. 2. 14, 15.

And Secondly, they have the light of the Creature without them, by which they may feel after God, *Acts* 17. 27. ——— *that they ſhould ſeek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him.* As we know the preſence of the Soul in the Body by feeling the Pulſe, ſo may, and ſo have the Heathens perceived God by their inſpection into the Creation: So ſaith the Apoſtle, *The inviſible things of him* (i. e. of God) *from the Creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead; ſo that they are without excuſe.* But now to Chriſtians, who live in the Climate of the Goſpel, God gives another greater light than thoſe of Nature and the Creature, *ſcil.* the light of the holy Scriptures, and the offers of Chriſt and Salvation by him

Rom. 1. 20.

him; the convictions also, and motions of the Spirit: The Spirit of God strives with men long, though not always. Besides, the Scripture holds forth to Christians the example of Christ, and of former Saints. Gen. 6.

And the Spirit also works in many men gifts and common grace, in some more, in some less. *Judas* had gifts as well as the rest of the Disciples; so had those that *prophecied in Christ's Name, and in his Name cast out Devils*——. Every man hath a *price* put into his hand, *even the fool.* God gives the worst of men among us a Portion to improve, and leaves them to husband their Talents. Matth. 7. 22. Prov. 7. 16.

And first, men themselves would have it so, as we see in this younger Son: Men love to have it so, as the Lord said of the Jews: Natural men think they can shift sufficiently for themselves; they are full of self-projects, and self-confidence withal: *I will pull down my barns and build bigger; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease* —— Such self-confident Creatures were those *Isa. 56. 12. To morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant.* Many men can live in the World without God; this is their conceit. *Reason* 1. Jer. 5. 31. Luke 12. 19. Eph. 2. 12.

Yea, better men than these mentioned have been prone to self-conceit, and self-confidence; not only *Peter*, but *James* and *John:* They asked Jesus to sit one at his right hand, and the other at his left---- *Jesus asked them, Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of? They say unto him, we are able.* But alas, as they knew not what they asked, so they knew not what they answered; for when Jesus Christ was to drink the Cup, these two Disciples left him as well as the rest. Matth. 20. 22.

We

We may ſee ſelf-conceit in the very Nature of man, if we obſerve Children when they firſt find their feet, they phancy they can go of themſelves, and venture, though they get falls.

2. As men love to have it ſo, *ſcil.* that God ſhould give them their Portions, and leave them to themſelves to husband it; ſo God will have it ſo, and that for divers Reaſons.

1. To juſtifie himſelf when he judgeth and condemneth men. God gives every man more than he uſeth well: We need not go to God's decree of Reprobation to juſtifie his damning men; we do not find that God will judge man by his decrees; he will not ſay, Thou art damned, becauſe I reprobated thee, but becauſe thou haſt not lived up to thy light, nor improv'd thy talent, thy knowledge, thy conſcience, thy opportunities, and many helps.

Matth. 25. 24. God reaps not where he ſows not, as fooliſh man is apt to charge him. Men will be damn'd for miſuſing their Portion God hath given them: the light, the means, the mercies, the afflictions, the Ordinances, and the examples God hath given and ſet before them to improve.

God will not need to condemn the Heathen for not believing in Chriſt, negative unbelief; *i. e.* unbelief for want of means damns not; but they will be damned for miſuſing the light of Nature, and the light of the Creature, that would have taught them more of God and themſelves than they would learn: *They are without excuſe*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *becauſe when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations.*

Rom. 1. 20, 21.

Indeed

Indeed evil and ſlothful Chriſtians will be damned for not coming home to Chriſt, and for not walking up to the Profeſſion of Chriſt they have made, becauſe they walk not in thoſe Duties of Holineſs the Goſpel diſcovers to them: Theſe men will be *ſpeechleſs* at the Sentence of Damnation which the Lord Jeſus will paſs on them, as he was in *Matthew* 22. 12. Their own Conſciences cannot but concurr with Sentence of Judgment; they will be ſpeechleſs; they will be ἀυτοκατάκριτοι, *Tit.* 3. 11. ſelf-judged and ſelf-condemned. They will not chat at God then, as they often do now. *Who hath reſiſted his will?* Nay, but O man, who art thou that replieſt againſt God, or anſwereſt againſt, or chatteſt with God? Qui tacet, conſentire videtur. Rom. 9. 19, 20.

2. God doth give all men, the worſt of men, their Portion, or Talents to improve, to glorifie his free Grace, and that two ways:

1. In entertaining ſuch as have abuſed their Stock put into their hands, as the Father did by his Prodigal Son, and as the Houſholder did by thoſe that came into his work but at the eleventh hour. Sins againſt light and goodneſs, when pardoned, are great illuſtrations of free Grace: That woman *loved much* when *much was forgiven her.* O when a *Saul obtains mercy*, after he hath been a *blaſphemer and a perſecutor*, after he hath turned the edge of all his learning, parts, gifts, and intereſt againſt the *Name* of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſo farr vitiated and debauched his Conſcience, as to do all this under pretence of Conſcience; as he himſelf ſaid, *I verily thought with my ſelf, that I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jeſus of Nazareth.* Luke 7. Acts 26. 9.

I say, for such a man, after such base abuse of his Talents, to be received to Grace and Mercy, *But I obtained mercy*, this must needs exalt the free Grace of God in the hearts of such as have so abused his Grace: For God might have said to such a man as to the wicked and slothful Servant, *Cast ye him into outer darkness:* There is desert enough for it, but free Grace over-rules the Case.

1 Tim. 1.

Matth. 25. 30.

2. God does it, that he may glorifie his free Grace in a free choice of the objects of his Grace; for all men in themselves are alike indisposed to honour God with their Portion he gives them. As we are all alike by Nature *the children of wrath*, so we are all by Nature *foolish, and disobedient, serving divers lusts.* All by Nature refuse and resist Grace. Now God takes whom he pleaseth out of their own hands and power into his, to be under his Discipline: He made *David* to *know wisdom in the hidden parts*; but did not so by *Saul*, ——*Thou hast hid these things* (saith our Lord Jesus to his Father, and that with thanks) *from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* And *to you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not.*

Eph. 2. 3.
Tit. 3. 3.
Psal. 51.
Matth. 11. 25.
Matth. 13. 11.

That Question of the Apostle in 1 *Cor.* 4. 7. supposeth this, *Who made thee to differ from another?* Indeed if the Question be asked a *Jesuit* or *Remonstrant*, he will Answer, *I my self made me to differ*; but it's a proud Answer: For it is plain, the Apostle asked not this Question to puff up man, but to humble him, and to exalt God, as appeareth by the following Question; *And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* and then, *Why dost thou glory*

glory, as if thou hadst not received it? It's evident St. *Paul's* ſcope was that which is the ſcope of the Goſpel, to *exclude boaſting:* It is likely that *Paul* directed his Queſtion to thoſe *Theologi gloriæ*, as *Luther* uſed to call the vain-glorious and ſelf-aſcribing Preachers at *Corinth*, who would ſeem to be ſome great ones, as *Simon* did in *Acts* 8. Acts 8.

In the Creation all was a confuſed Chaos till the Spirit moved on the face of the Waters, and then there was a diſtinction of Creatures: So all men by Nature are a confuſed maſs, all in darkneſs, and diſobedience, and abuſers of our Portions, turning our Talents againſt God who gives them, as the Children of *Iſrael* made an Idol of the golden Earrings of the *Egyptians* which God had given them. Gen. 1. Exod. 32. 3, 4.

She did not know, ſaith the Lord, *that I gave her Corn and Wine and Oyl, and multiplied her Silver and Gold which they prepared for Baal*, or wherewith they made *Baal*. Such abuſers are men of their Parts and Portions he gives them, until he changes their hearts, and giveth them another ſpirit. All are like *Oneſimus* before his Converſion, *unprofitable Servants*, contrary to his *Name*, which ſignifieth *uſeful or profitable*; but when *Oneſimus* was Converted, then he anſwered his Name to purpoſe; *Now profitable to thee and to me*, *Philem.* 11. *verſ.* He became both a faithful Servant and a faithful Brother: So contrary are men in a ſtate of Grace to what they were in their Natural ſtate. Hoſ. 2. 8. Philemon 11. Heinſ. & Sculte. in loc. Coloſ. 4. 9.

Queſt. But whence is this Change?

Anſw. Not of man himſelf, but of God: He that made the old Creature makes the new. It is not the ſpirit of man that produces Regeneration,

John 3. but the Spirit of God; *Except a man be born again of the Spirit*——. All Converts to a ſtate of Grace, are *begotten* and *born of God: He that is*

John 1.3 — *begotten of God*, and *born of God*, are uſual expreſſions with St. *John*.

3. God gives men a Portion, and leaves them to husband it, that he may humble them in the ſenſe and proof of their own weakneſs and impotency, and make them look for help from Grace: God will have men humbled, not only for ſin, but alſo for their impotency to get Grace.

There muſt be in men a double ſelf-deſpair; one

Rom. 3. 19. in regard of ſin and guilt; *All the world muſt become guilty before God:* And another in regard of ſelf-impotency to get Grace when they feel they need it. Senſe of ſin will make a man ſeek Grace; and ſenſe of impotency will make him ſeek it of God: Many have the firſt ſelf-deſpair, but want the ſecond; for though they are out of hope in regard of their ſins, yet not as to their own conceited ſelf-ſufficiency to repent and turn to God.

Here lieth the reaſon of many mens not repenting and turning from ſin to God, their thoughts of

Joſh. 24. 19, 21 their Can when they will. *Joſhua* told the people, *Ye cannot ſerve the Lord, for he is an holy God*: The people reply, *Nay, but we will ſerve the Lord.* Men commonly cheat themſelves with ſelf-conceit and confidence in the power of their own wills.

Alas,

Alas, God must not only give men power to seek Grace, but power to accept of it when he gives it, and power to use it when they have it. *Ephraim* had been brisk enough in self-dependence; *his pride did testifie to his face:* yet at length *Ephraim* crieth out, *Turn thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned.* You that have Grace know, that not only the gift of Grace, but the use of Grace also is of God: *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Hos. 5. 5.

Jer. 31. 18.

Phil. 2. 12, 13.

The Spirit of God must help godly mens *infirmities in prayer*, *Rom.* 8. 26. teach them *what to say* when brought *before Rulers for Christ his sake*, *Matth.* 10. 19, 20. *Thou hast wrought all our works for us*, *Isa.* 26. 12. If God did not do thus for his own people, they would manage a state of of grace but ill. When *Hezekiah* was left to himself but in one point, he miscarried sadly: And therefore it is not ordinary for God to leave his people to themselves; he did *Hezekiah*, yet but in one single case, to find him matter of humbling in himself, as he had had matter of glorying in God. And

2 Chro. 32. 31.

We all may see our own insufficiency in him, even in common actions; yea, to a good thought, we are like young Writers who must have their Hand and Pen guided, else they make bad Letters. Had not Jesus Christ prayed for *Peter's* faith, it had failed him; and it's thus with every Grace and all Duties: And therefore little Grace acted with great dependance on Christ, will do more than a greater measure of Grace, but less dependance on Christ's assistance.

2 Cor. 3. 5.

Luke 22. 32.

John 15. 5.

St.

St. *Paul* aſcribes not only the dignity of his Apoſtleſhip to God, but all his actual ſervice therein; *By the grace of God I am what I am. I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me:* Not to the Grace of God in me, but with me: He refers the honour of the Caſe, not to inherent, but aſſiſting Grace.

1 Cor. 15. 10.

This is the reaſon why men receive not Grace, becauſe they truſt to their own purpoſes and endeavours above their allowance: And this is the reaſon why many, who have received Grace, do not increaſe and grow in Grace as ſome others do, becauſe they live not dependingly enough on aſſiſting Grace.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

In which Application is made of the foregoing Doctrine; in ſhewing how much it concerns every man to improve his Portion from God; and in giving Directions for the doing of it.

I Have already ſhewed, That God gives to every man a Portion to be improved; together with the Reaſons for his ſo doing. I now proceed to the Uſes we are to make hereof. And

1. This exhorts us to conſider our ſelves as Children who muſt give an account of our Portion to God our Father, and as Servants to our Lord. We have all a Stock to husband; every one hath one Talent at leaſt; *There is a price even in the hand of a fool, Prov.* 17.16. Matth. 25.

God gave *Adam* at firſt the whole World for his Portion, and his own Image, beſides a ſpecial Commandment as his Talent to improve. And ſince Chriſt aſcended, God hath given the World the offer of Chriſt as their Portion, beſides the things of this life. Gen. cap. 1, 2. Matth. 28. 19.

But

Mark 16. 16. John 3. 16. But as *Adam* abuſed his Portion, and was therefore thruſt out of Paradiſe, and the Earth that was part of his Bleſſing, was curſed: ſo the World now abuſeth their Talent, eſpecially the offer of Chriſt; John 3. 19. and this will be their *condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs rather than light.* And if this Judgment paſs not on the Heathen, yet they have the light of Nature, with the Book of the Creation, to point them to God, to fear, and love him, and to admire, and adore his power, and wiſdome, and goodneſs: and their miſcarriage in theſe will leave them without excuſe. Rom. 1. 20, 21. And Chriſtians have another Book beſides that of Nature, and that of the Creature, the holy Scriptures, and there Chriſt offers himſelf, and grace and glory with him; and if you improve not theſe Talents well, the Scriptures will judge you: *He that* John 12. 48. *rejecteth me*, ſaith Chriſt, *and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: The word that I have ſpoken, the ſame ſhall judge him in the laſt day.*

And men that have grace have more Talents than all others; they have all five Talents in reſpect of other men, though amongſt themſelves, one hath five, another two, and another one; there are 1 John 2. 12. *fathers, yonng men, and children* among them.

My Brethren, there is nothing that any man hath but it is part of his Portion, and he muſt be accountable for the management of it; his degree, his calling, his time, his ſtrength, his weakneſs, his comforts, his croſſes, his natural parts, his ſpiritual gifts, his grace, his means of grace, his eſtate, his priviledges, his ways, his words, his thoughts, God takes notice of a man's thoughts, and how he improves

improves them. *Thou underſtandeſt my thoughts afar off*, *Pſal.* 139.2. *And a Book of Remembrance was written before the Lord for them that thought upon his Name.* And *there is not a word in my tongue, but, O Lord, thou knoweſt it altogether, and art acquainted with all my ways. I ſay unto you*, ſaith Jeſus, *that every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account thereof in the day of Judgment:* And *we ſhall all ſtand before the Judgment Seat of Chriſt*; And *every one of us ſhall give account of himſelf to God.* Matth. 3.16. Pſal. 139.3,4. Matth. 12.36 Rom. 14.10,12 2 Cor. 5.10.

But I cannot name all things Chriſtians muſt be accountable for; it is certain for all their *truſt*. *Paul* had his *truſt*, 2 *Tim.* 1.11. and *Timothy* had his *truſt*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 20. and we have every one of us our *truſt*. 1 Pet. 4.5.

And by the way, Let the thoughts of this either prevent or prevail over your grudgings at the greater eſtates, larger parts and priviledges which others have above you; they are but Truſtees in all; as to men, they are Maſters of their own in a manner; but as to God, they are all Stewards and Servants, even the greateſt of men, of Lords and Ladies; *give an account of thy ſtewardſhip.* Luke 16.2.

The Lord called *Moſes* his Servant, and *Caleb* his Servant, and *David* his Servant, and *Nebuchadnezzer* his Servant, yea, Jeſus Chriſt, as man, his Servant, *Iſaiah* 42. 1. It was the Reply of a great Lady to one that told her, God had given her much; *No*, ſaith ſhe, *God hath lent me much to improve, and I muſt be accountable to him for all I have.* Num. 12.7. & 14.24. Pſal. 116. Jer. 25.9.

O O

O let all consider their Portions, and their improvements of them for God: *Honour the Lord with thy substance*; God expects you should *eat, and drink*, and rest, and work, and do all *to his glory*. Men must give an account how they have used the light of Nature, and the light of Grace; their honour, their parts, their time, their trades, their relations; they are intrusted with all to improve for God as well as themselves; as the Apostle saith of the gifts of the Spirit. But alas, how many spend their stock upon their lusts; *The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, or the pride of life*? And of those that do not thus, how many let their gifts lie fallow, and do little or nothing for God with them? Others devote their Estates to their covetous hearts: This is for a Lamentation.

Prov. 3. 9.
1 Cor. 10. 31.
1 Cor. 12. 7.

Yea, where is the Christian that leaves all sin he might, and does all the good he might; that prays so much as he might, and walks by Faith as he might, and denieth himself so much as he might, and hath his conversation in Heaven so much as he might? We all need Christ to make up our Accounts to God, more than *Onesimus* did *Paul* to make up his to *Philemon*.

Quest. But where lies the power of improvement? Not in us; it lies in the hand of God: *We are not sufficient of our selves, as of our selves to think any thing; all our sufficiency is of God.* And the Father hath given this power into the Son's hand; *Without me*, said Jesus, *ye can do nothing.*

2 Cor. 3. 5, 6.
John 3. 35.
John 15. 5.

Answ. It is true; but there is an open way for us to God by Christ; and an open way to Christ by his own offer; *Come unto me* —— And St. *James* saith, *Ye have not, because ye ask not.*

James 4. 2.

But

But now to those that lay this block in their own way, and make this Objection, either they make it of experience and proof, or else of meer cavil. If the former, if you have willed it, and laboured for it, and bemoan'd your selves in the want of it, then you have but one step to it; for if you are come to self-despair, through sense of impotency, now is the time of that Promise, *The feeble shall be as David:* and that, *He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.* Do but now fix your eye on God, as the *lame man* did on *Peter* and *John*, and he'll bid you *rise and walk.* Zach. 12. 8. Isa. 40. 29. Acts 3.

When Saul went to seek his Father's Asses, and could not find them, he went to a Seer, to a Prophet, and had good speed: Why so when you cannot get grace, or ask grace, or do duty of your selves, by your own strength, take hold on God, and welcome; *Let him take hold on my strength.* 1 Sam. 9. Isa. 27. 5.

But if you make this Objection of Cavil, be it known to you, you mistake your selves; you'l miss of your excuse you phansie to your selves. He that had but one Talent had his Cavils; his Master was *a hard Master*, &c. But did this excuse him? No. Matth. 25. 24. &c.

It is one thing to know your own impotency to get grace, or improve grace, only by hear-say; and another to know it by experience and trial. If you object it, when you know it only by hear-say from the Minister and the Word of God, it is but a Cavil and a sorry Excuse: It is your knowledge of it by trial and proof that will make you look out of your selves for your strength, and that will bring you in grace, with power to improve it. You should

work out your own Salvation with no leſs pains, than if your own pains ſhould procure it.

It is true, God gives the ſucceſs; this is all in his hand, 1 *Cor.* 3. 7. But he gives ſucceſs to him that labours for it. St. *Paul* makes not his inference thus; Becauſe God hath all grace, and gives all, I'le do nothing; but therefore do *you work*, becauſe *it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.* You muſt labour as much, as if to will and to do were in your own power: You muſt work that God may work.

Phil. 2. 12, 13.

Many from their impotency father their ſin and their condemnation for it on God; it is in way of Cavil, and not from their bewailed ſad experience.

Nay, the truth is, it is common with natural men to think themſelves abler than they are, witneſs their frequent reſolutions in good moods; O what they will do and be! As thoſe Heathens profeſſed themſelves to be wiſe, ſo do natural men; they ſometimes profeſs their ability, and ſometimes their impotency; but have little practical knowledge of either.

Rom. 1. 21.

Some men again diſable themſelves beyond their natural diſability; they weaken their natural power by their own wilfulneſs; and this is ſo farr from an excuſe, as it's an aggravation of their ſin. If a Maſter ſend his man to Market, and he is drunk, and ſo cannot do his buſineſs, will this diſability excuſe him? Surely no; it rather doubles his fault. This is the caſe of theſe Objectors of their impotency; their impotency is their own, they cannot charge it upon God; they may charge it in part upon *Adam* indeed; but when they come to declare their own will;

will, they make it their own impotency.

Ye will not come to me that ye might have life. John 5. 40. They are impotent, and they love to have it so, as the Lord said of the Jews. They would not come Jer. 5. 31. to Christ, as he would have them, if they could. Thus much for answer to the Objection, and also for the use of Exhortation.

This Doctrine may also put us all upon enquiry after direction in this case of infinite moment. *Use* 2.

1. We must take an account of our Receipts from God, what our Talent and Trust amounts to. As those that take in work from others, observe what they take, that they may know what to return; we should consider, That God observes what he gives, and so should we what we receive, what estates, what education, what parts, what means of grace, what motions of the Spirit, what workings of Conscience, what temptations, what afflictions, what deliverances, what experiences, what encouragements in promises and providence.

Remember, God himself takes an account of what stock he hath put into our hands, as he ordered *Samuel* to tell *Saul*, *When thou wast little in thine own eyes, wast thou not made the head of the Tribes of Israel? and the Lord anointed thee King over Israel, &c.* 1 Sam. 15. 17.

And this account God ordered *Nathan* to give to *David*; *Thus saith the Lord, I anointed thee King over* Israel, *and I delivered thee out of the hands of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosome, and gave thee the house of* Israel *and of* Judah, *&c.* 2 Sam. 12.

Suppose

Suppose thy self to be thus charged of God with an account of all he hath put into thine hands: for as
Psal. 50.21. he will set mens sins in order before them; so he will do their Talents and Trust.

2. Be sensible, and knowing by experience, of your own inability to discharge your Trust, though you have but one Talent; be as sensible in the case as *Moses* was of his insufficiency to deliver *Israel* out *Egypt*; *Lord, who am I, that I should go in to* Pha-
Exod. 3.11. Exod. 4.10. raoh, *&c. I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.*

So sensible was *Gideon* of his weakness in himself
Judges 6. to deliver *Israel*; *Lord, wherewith shall I save* Israel? Thus sensible be you of your own impotency to improve your Trust from God, be it never so small.

3. Look to the great assistance that is provided for
Phil. 4.13. you; *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.*
1 Cor. 15.10. *I have laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was*
Phil. 2.13. *with me. It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.* O look with incouragement for help, for auxiliary grace in all your Trust: *I will*
Psal. 32.8. *instruct thee, I will teach thee and guide thee: I*
Exod. 4.12. *will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what to say.*
Psal. 112. *Thou shalt guide thine affairs with discretion. The Spirit shall teach you all things, Joh.* 14.26. When our Lord Jesus Christ sent forth the Seventy upon special business, they did his work with his power,
Luke 10. 17. and so returned with a joyful account; *Lord, even the Devils are subject to us through thy Name,* or Power.

4. Look to your Undertaker, for your accounts, even your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As *Paul*
Philem. v. 8. was for *Onesimus*; *If he hath wronged thee any thing,*

thing, put it on my account; I will repay it. The ſame is our dear Lord Jeſus to a Believer, and much more; *Ye are compleat in him:* He is a ſurety to God for Believers; and what thou canſt not make up of thy account, put it upon his. Col. 2. 10. Heb. 7. 22.

It hath been great relief to the Conſciences of many poor ſinners, that when Satan hath charged them, and they have owned the charge, but withal have ſeen their liberty to turn him over to Chriſt their Surety: Thus maiſt thou humbly, and reverently, and believingly do; *Lord, I come ſhort in my accounts of the portion which thou haſt put into my hands, and committed to my truſt; but Lord, be pleaſed to look on Chriſt's accounts, and there are mine made up to the full.* Not that every man may make thus bold with our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; but thoſe that indeed believe in Chriſt, that have caſt themſelves upon Chriſt upon the tearms of the Goſpel; they that love the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity, and live to him, as well as look for life by him, ſuch may doubtleſs uſe this freedom. Chriſt pays the true Believers Debts, and *blots out all hand-writings that are againſt him:* So much for the 12*th* Verſe. 1 John 2. 2. Col. 2. 14.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Repreſenteth how quickly man forſakes God, when God leaves him to himſelf; with the Reaſons whence it comes to paſs; and the Uſes we are to make hereof, from the firſt Clauſe of the following Verſe,

And not many days after, &c.

THE younger Son having got his Portion into his own hand, begins to act his part; firſt in ſin, in this verſe; ſecondly in ſorrow, in the 14, 15, 16*th* verſes; thirdly in repentance, in the 17*th*, &c. In the two former he is the picture of all natural men; in the third but of ſome, yea of few. In acting his part in ſin; firſt, he preſently leaves his Father's houſe: ſecondly, he goes into a farr Countrey: thirdly, there he ſpends all his Portion in luxury and riot.

Now in this Prodigal Son there are repreſented to us many things in natural men of ſad Obſervation.

1. Here we ſee how ſoon man leaves God, when God leaves man to himſelf; man makes haſt to ſin againſt

againſt God. *Not many days after the younger Son took his journey into a farr Countrey, &c.*

This is the temper and inclination of the rational Creature, they ſin ſo ſoon as they can; and herein they appear to be irrational: We ſee this both in the Angelical and Human Nature. The Angels that were left to themſelves ſinned preſently, they forthwith left their firſt eſtate: *The Devil abode not in the truth*, ſaith our Bleſſed Saviour in the Evangeliſt *John*. The Angels that fell from their pure and excellent ſtate immediately, they left their own habitation, as St. *Jude* expreſſeth it, *i. e.* their heavenly places. Hence it is ſaid, that *God charged his Angels with folly*, becauſe of their mutability and inconſtancy in holineſs and happineſs. Jude 6. John 8. 44. Job 4. 18.

Some of the *School-men* hit right in this. *A Creature*, ſaith *Aquinas*, *though never ſo excellent and holy, may and will ſin, if not prevented and aſſiſted by grace.* And this was the Anſwer St. *Auguſtine* gave to the Queſtion, How the Angels came to ſin ſo ſoon, *Quia non Deus ſunt*, becauſe they are not God. God only is immutable in his being; *With him there is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning. I am the Lord, I change not*, *Mal.* 3. 6. James 1. 17.

But many Angels changed their condition preſently; *The Devil ſinneth from the beginning*: the Devil, that is, the Prince of the Angels that left their firſt eſtate. A ſpace there was between their Creation and defection; Firſt, that it might appear they came holy Angels out of God's hand: And ſecondly, that they might remember afterwards, and for ever, from whence they were fallen; as our Lord ſaid to the Angel or Paſtor of the Church of 1 John 3. 8. Rev. 2. 5.

Ephesus. Yet 'tis likely it was but a little after their holy Creation before they sinned; it was before the sin of man, for man sinned by the instigation of the Devil.

Gen. 3. 2 Cor. 11. 3.

And as the Angels soon fell from glory, so did man from grace, from his innocent state, from his likeness to God after which he was made: Some think he fell the same day he was created; others think not so. The Scripture saith, *Man being in honour, abideth not*: He lodged not one night in his honour, as the Hebrew imports.

Gen. 1. 26.

Psal. 40. 12.

It is the nature of man to make haste to sin, as the Lord said to *Moses* (when he was with him on the Mount) of the Children of *Israel*, *They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them*: and of the same people in the *Judges*, *They turned quickly out of the way their fathers walked in, which kept my Commandments*. And the Psalmist speaking of man's disposition and complexion by nature, saith thus of him, *That he is estranged from the womb, he goes astray as soon as he is born*. Men are born with evil Dispositions, and act them so soon as their Faculties can sin, if grace prevent not.

Exod. 32. 8.

Judges 2. 17.

Psal. 58. 3.

Young Nettles sting, and young Crabs go backward; and so man in his youth dedicates himself to sin, *Youth and Childhood are vanity*; and St. *Paul* speaks of *youthful lusts*. How soon were the *Galatians removed*, or transported as the Greek signifies, *unto another Gospel*. The Church of *Corinth* was presently corrupted; and so were the Seven Churches of *Asia*.

Eccles. 11. 10. 2 Tim. 2. 22. Gal. 1. 6.

Rea-

Reaſons of the Doctrine.

1. Becauſe the corrupted nature of man is greedy of ſin, *They work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs*: They have a ſtrong appetite to ſin; the ſtrength of appetite, as in the Hebrew, therefore called *greedy dogs*. Man ſinned almoſt ſo ſoon as he was, and if he might, he would ſin as long as he is, and would, if he could, ſin for ever, and be for ever that he might ſin: How will men break through all reſtraints to ſin? as *Balaam* would have ruſh'd through all the checks and diſappointments he met with in his way to curſe *Iſrael*. Eph. 4. 19. Iſa. 56. 11. Omnis peccator peccat in æternum.

Though *the dumb Aſs forbad his madneſs*, and the *Angel ſtood in his way with a drawn ſword* to ſtop him, yet he was violently hurried on with the ſtrong impulſe of his own luſts. 2 Pet. 2. 16. Num. 22. 23 to 30.

St. Ambroſe ſpeaks of one *Theolimus*, who being told by his Phyſician, That unleſs he left his intemperance, he would loſe his eyes: His heart was ſo deſperately ſet on his luſt, that he replied, *Then farewell eyes; I muſt drink, though I drink out my eyes.* On Luke 4. Tunc vale lumen.

Thus do the hearts of many ſay, though not their mouths, Farewell God, farewell Chriſt, farewell Heaven, I muſt have my luſt. *Amnon's* luſting after *Tamar* is an inſtance in the caſe. *The fool hath ſaid in his heart there is no God*, i. e. O that there were no God! Look what trouble it is to Saints to part with God, ſuch trouble it is to wicked men to part with ſin. *There is no hope*, No; for *I have* Pſal. 14. 2. 2 Jer. 25.

loved ſtrangers, and after them I will go. The immediate reaſon of mens ſinning is their will: It was ſo in the fall, and ſo it is ſince.

2. A ſecond Reaſon why men make ſo much haſte to ſin is their weakneſs; no man by nature hath ſtrength enough to hold out againſt temptations to ſin: If God were not infinite in ſtrength, he would
1 Sam. 15. 29. not be immutable; *The ſtrength of* Iſrael *will not repent*, or change. But the firſt temptation turned man upſide down; and ſince the Devil had that ſucceſs, he follows man cloſe with temptations; and if
Num. 22, & 23. he fails in one, he preſently tries another, as *Balaam* did experiments to curſe *Iſrael.*

Man is too weak a Creature to ſtand out a temptation to ſin without the aid of grace, either preventing or aſſiſting grace, beſides inherent: It was ſeen in *Hezekiah*, and in *Peter*, when left to themſelves. Grace it ſelf, of it ſelf, is not immutable. The godly know by experience that it is ſubject to ebbings and flowings; and the reaſon why the people of God do not quite loſe grace, is not from the nature of grace in it ſelf, but becauſe grace in
John 1. 16. the Saints is fed by grace from the fulneſs of Chriſt;
Jer. 32. 40. and becauſe the Covenant of grace hath undertaken they ſhall not totally and finally fall from grace.

And again, grace is upheld in the godly by their communion with God, and therefore the more this communion is interrupted, the leſs grace, and the more ſin Saints themſelves have: Hence it is that when they come to live in the bleſſed viſion of God in Heaven, they ceaſe to ſin, and there is no more capacity of ſinning.

This

This is the reason why the elect Angels, so called in Scripture, stood in their first estate; free grace preserved them in the beatifical vision, and still doth; And *they always behold the face of my Father in Heaven*, saith our blessed Saviour. O remember that man is by nature a weak Creature, and yet very wilfull, and would be independent on God, and so *the Devil leads him captive at his will.* 1 Tim. 5.21. Matth. 18. 10. 2 Tim. 2.26.

Application.

1. This shews us the necessity and mercy of preventing and restraining grace; were it not for this, the World would be fuller of sin than it is, even like the old World; all places would be *Sodoms*, and the godly as *Lots* therein. But God makes wicked men chew upon the Bit; he seeth they have need of Bit and Bridle, as well as the Horse; *I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips*, saith the Lord to *Sennacherib*. Psal. 32. 9. Isa. 37. 29.

If God had not restrained *Balaam*, he would have cursed *Israel*; he made many attempts after disappointments. Had not the Lord withheld *Abimelech*, he had wronged *Sarah*: And when the Lord saw that nothing would be restrained from the builders of *Babel* which they had imagined to do, he confounded their language. Gen. 20. 6. Gen. 11. 6, 7.

2. This may be of use to humble us all, that we were innocent, and without sin so little a while; we made haste to sin, we soon left God in *Adam*, as this younger Son did his Father; this I say should humble us, that *our goodness was as the morning cloud*, *Use* 2. Hos. 6. 4.

cloud, and paſſed away as the early dew. Our firſt Parents were holy Creatures when they came out of the hand of a holy God; but they were like the *Ephemera*, their holineſs was but holineſs for a day; but *we have ſinned days without number*, as the Lord ſaid to his people in *Jeremiah*. We begin betimes to ſin, and hold on till God break us off from ſo ſinning. This was the melting Confeſſion of the Lord's people; *We have ſinned againſt the Lord our God, we and our fathers from our youth.*

Jer. 2. 32.

Jer. 3. 25.

And as this ſhould humble us, that we begin ſo early to ſin; ſo we have reaſon to be humbled, that uſually we are ſo long before we are good: It is commonly many years before our Converſion to a ſtate of grace: Some come not in to God till the *ſixth hour*; others not till *the eleventh*; O how ſhould this humble late Converts, that they are good ſo little a ſpace on earth? Some indeed *give God the kindneſs of their youth*; God hath their Firſt-fruits; he *ſets them apart for himſelf* from their infancy; *Before thou cameſt out of the womb I ſanctified thee*, ſaith the Lord to *Jeremiah*. *Samuel* was good from his youth; *The Child* Samuel *miniſtred unto the Lord: I thy ſervant fear the Lord from my youth*, ſaid *Obadiah* to *Elijah*. And *Timothy knew the holy Scriptures from a child*, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15. but theſe are rare Birds.

Mark 2 9.

Jer. 2.

Jer. 1. 5.

1 Sam. 3. 1.

1 Kings 18. 12.

There are ſome indeed that think themſelves to have been Saints, but no ſuch matter: as that young, rich, great man, *All theſe have I kept from my youth*; but he was miſtaken.

Matth. 19. 20.

And

And there are others make a ſhew betimes, as if they would look towards God and Heaven, but retreat again; ſuch as God ſpake of in *Jer.* 2. 2. *I remember thee, and the kindneſs of thy youth*; and yet in the fifth Verſe he complains that *they were gone farr from him, and become vain.* Some have kindneſs, or rather ſeem to have kindneſs for God in their youth, but never after; *They begin in the ſpirit, but end in the fleſh.* Gal. 3. 3. The Angel of the Church of *Epheſus left his firſt love.* Rev. 2. 4.

3. This may ſpeak comfort to thoſe that are Saints, and God's holy ones indeed: And wherein? Becauſe they have a contrary diſpoſition to this of natural men: Natural men make haſte to ſin; they make haſte to do good; *I made haſte, and delaid not to keep thy Commandments.* This gracious diſpoſition was propheſied ſhould be in Converts among the Gentiles: *Ethiopia ſhall ſoon ſtretch out her hand unto God: And the Inhabitants of one City ſhall go to another, ſaying, Let us go ſpeedily to pray before the Lord, I will go alſo.* *Uſe* 3. Pſal. 119. 60. Pſal. 68. 31. Zach. 8. 21.

The will of a godly man is ſeldome behind to any holy duty; *To will is preſent with me.* And where this is, there is a badge of grace, and of a holy nature: The fleſh indeed makes them linger ſometimes, as *Lot* did in coming out of *Sodom*; but when the regenerate part ſitteth in the chair, then the Soul calls, as the Lord did to *Lot*, *Haſte thee, haſte thee to* Zoar. As other men haſted after their gods, ſo *David* haſted after his God; *Awake up my glory, awake Pſaltery and Harp, I my ſelf will awake early.* Rom. 7. 18. Gen. 19. Pſal. 16. 4. Pſal. 57. 8.

With

With my ſpirit will I ſeek thee early, Iſaiah 26. 9.

Heb. 3. 7. Delays in Religion are dangerous; *To day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts.*

Mark 25. 11. The fooliſh Virgins were too late to enter in to the Marriage with the Bridegroom. Thus much for the Obſervation from the firſt words of the Verſe (*And not many days after*) *viz.* That ſo ſoon as God leaves man to himſelf, he ſoon goes away from God.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Sheweth the worldlineſs of man's heart by nature; from the next Clauſe of the 13th. Verſe,

The younger Son gathered all together.

HE bundled up his happineſs, even his gods with his goods, as *Rachel* did *Laban's*. He ſaid to his Soul, as that rich man did, *Soul, thou haſt much goods laid up for many years, take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry.* This young man carried his gods in his goods; and herein he gives us to take notice, Gen. 31. Luke 12. 19.

That it is a diſpoſition in natural men to carry their gods in their goods; their hearts, which ſhould be the ſeat and temple of God, is the habitation of theſe. Doctrine.

This young man's Portion was his all, even his Heaven and his God. St. *Paul* ſpeaks of ſome *whoſe belly was their god*: And *Job* of thoſe *whoſe gold was their god*, being their hope and their Phil. 3. 19. Job 31. 24.

confidence. Many men have their Portion in this
Pſal. 17. 14. life; their Heaven and Earth together.

Every thing is a mans god that feeds his luſt, and his heart is ſet upon, as the *Iſraelites* golden
Exod. 32. 4. Calf was to them; *Theſe are thy gods, O Iſrael*—
Judges 17. 4. and as *Micahs* Mothers eleven hundred ſhekels of ſilver were turned into Gods. And thus all natural men make gods of their luſts, or of their goods, on which they fix their hearts. They carry their
Gen. 31. 34. gods in their goods, as *Rachel* hid her Father's Idols in the Stuff. It is natural to man to ſeek his
Pſal. 17. 14. felicity here. The Scripture calls them *men of this world*; here are their hearts, and here they would always be, if they might have their choice.
Luke 9. 33. They have a greater mind to be here, than *Peter* had to be on Mount *Tabor*.

Their inward thought is, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *that*
Pſal. 49. 11. *their houſes ſhall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.*

This ſhews that their hearts are wholly here;
Phil. 3. 19. their minds are given up to earthly things. So they might be here on earth for ever, they could
Gen. 25. 31. be content to be out of heaven; as *Eſau* parted with his birthright for a meſs of Pottage.

Luke 10. 20. Our bleſſed Saviour bad his Diſciples *rejoyce rather that their names were written in heaven, than that the Devils were ſubject to them.* But theſe men would rejoyce rather if their names might be written on Earth. Though the
Jer. 17. 13. Scripture ſpeaks of it as a Judgment; *They that depart from me ſhall be written in the earth:* Yet earthly things lie neareſt to a carnal man's heart; as it's ſaid Queen *Mary* ſhould ſay on her

her Death-bed, *That if they ſaw her heart when dead, they ſhould ſee* Calice *there.* The *Iſraelites* appetite or phancy was more after the Leeks, and Onions, and Garlick of *Egypt*, than after Manna. Numb.11.5,6.

Men are apt to ſet up Idols in their hearts, many places in *Ezekiel* ſhew it; the children of *Iſrael* choſe new gods. The Devil would be the god of this World; this is his *name* by uſurpation, 2 *Cor.*4.4. Many mens hearts are devoted to him, and know it not; as it's ſaid of *Ephraim*, that he had gray hairs and knew it not: yea, he made an eſſay for Chriſt's heart and devotion to him. And when he cannot get in himſelf into the hearts of men, as he wiſhes, then he gets into one Creature or other to be as god there. When *Eſau* ſaid to *Jacob*, *I have enough*; what was his enough? the fulneſs of his outward condition without God. Carnal men can be content with the World without God; they *are without God in the world.* The Creature, in ſome ſort, ſatisfies them without God, as it does the Beaſt. Man makes himſelf in this like the Beaſt. *Eſau* neither ſaw, nor ſought God in *Jacob's* face, as *Jacob* did in his, *Gen.*33.10. Men naturally affect the Creature more than the Creator. Indeed, if a godly man have not God for his Portion, his all he hath is nothing: *The Lord is my portion, ſaith my ſoul:* and, *whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I deſire beſides thee.* The Lord knows indeed that his Saints on earth have need of earthly things, as our bleſſed Saviour ſaid to his Diſciples. And therefore gives them of theſe more or leſs, as he ſees meet; yet whatever he gives them of the World, he ſo gives it, that they may ſee him in it, as *Jacob* did in *Eſau's* face. Judges 5.8. Gen.33.9. Eph.2.12. Pſal.49.20. Rom.1.25. Lam.3.24. Pſal.73.25. Matth.6.32.

O take heed of thinking you have enough, when you have the moſt of this world, except you have God with it, and ſee God in it. Take heed of this young man's ſpirit; when he had got his Portion, he now feels no want of his Father, but takes his journey into a farr Countrey: Take heed alſo of thinking that you have not enough of the worlds good things, when you have, or may have God himſelf with your little; for now your little is as much as All; and you may ſay with the holy Apoſtle, 2 Cor. 6. 10. *As having nothing, yet poſſeſſing all things.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Wherein is ſhewed, How inclinable man is by nature to go farther and farther from God; from the following Clauſe,

And took his journey into a far Countrey.

IN this courſe of the Prodigal, who herein is the Repreſentative, as it were, of natural men, we may obſerve two Doctrines; the firſt (whereof in this Chapter) is this,

That man by nature would go farther and farther from God; he would get to the utmoſt point of diſtance from him. Doct. 1.

This Prodigal did not only leave his Father's Houſe, but went into a far Countrey. Ungodly men love to be far from God, that they may ſin their fill. As a godly man goes from grace to grace, ſo an ungodly man from ſin to ſin. As it is their Judgment to do ſo; *Add iniquity to their iniquity*, ſo it is their choice; *They go from evil to evil.* The *E-* Pſal. 73. 27. Pſal. 69. 27. Jer. 9. 3.

pheſians,

Eph. 2. *pheſians*, before their Converſion, were *afar of, and*
Gen. 3. *without God in the world.* When *Adam* was fallen from his innocency, he got as far from God as he
Pſal. 10. 4. could. Natural men ſhove God out of their thoughts as much as they can.

It is true, all natural men are not at an equal diſtance from God actually, though all are by nature inclined to be at the fartheſt point: There are degrees in a natural ſtate, as there are in a ſpiritual. Our Lord Jeſus told him that anſwered him ſo diſ-
Mark 12. 34. creetly, That *he was not far from the Kingdom of God.* Some men are utter ſtrangers to Chriſt; others are bordering on Converſion; yet ſtill in their natural ſtate; as the *Iſraelites* were at the borders of *Canaan*, when yet they entred not in.

Queſt. But what is the neareſt or leaſt point of diſtance from Chriſt, in a natural condition; and what is the fartheſt?

Anſw. When men like Chriſt, but not at his terms, yet are troubled the terms are ſo hard that they cannot yield to them: When Jeſus told that man in *Mark* 10. 21. That *he muſt ſell all, and follow him*, it is ſaid the man was ſad at that ſaying, *and went away grieved* —— *v.* 22. This man was bordering upon Chriſt, but left him.

John 2. 23, 24. So when men make a profeſſion of Chriſt, and yet their hearts are not right towards him; they are near Chriſt, but not near enough, they are not in him: *Many believed on his Name, but Jeſus did not commit himſelf unto them, for he knew what was in man.*

Jer. 12. 2. *Thou art near in their mouths, and far from their*
Iſa. 29. 13. *reins*, ſaith *Jeremiah* to the Lord. And again, natural men may be near God, as in profeſſion, ſo in

pri-

priviledges: *Judas* was one of Christ's Disciples, one of the Twelve: And the people of *Israel* were *a people near unto God.* This is the neareſt point of distance from God. Pſal. 148. 14.

But then ſecondly for the fartheſt point of diſtance; and this is, when men live as it were without God in the world; live in ſin without ſenſe of it, and ſin with greedineſs; it is meat and drink to them to ſin, as it was to Jeſus Chriſt to do his Father's will; *They drink iniquity like water,* Job 15. 16. *and who being paſt feeling;* whoſe ſenſe of feeling, as to any evil in ſin, is gone; *They give themſelves over to work wickedneſs: Ahab ſold himſelf,* but ſome *give* themſelves *to ſin.* Theſe are Candidates at leaſt in Atheiſm. *They ſay the Lord ſhall not ſee:* And they think *that God is ſuch an one as themſelves:* and thus they flatter themſelves in their own eyes; they half think there is no God, and altogether wiſh it. Few men indeed are always or altogether Atheiſts: The Devil can never be an Atheiſt, being always under the ſenſe of God's wrath; but he tempts men to be Atheiſts, and prevails very far, yet not to the full. Eph. 2. 12. John 4. 34. 1 Kings 22. 20 Eph. 4. 19. Pſal. 94. 5. Pſal. 50. 21. Pſal. 36. 2. Pſal. 14. 1.

They lie, ſaith the Philoſopher, that ſay they hold there is no God; for though they ſay ſo to others by day, yet they ſay otherwiſe to themſelves by night: theſe are the men that keep at the fartheſt point of diſtance from God, which was this Prodigals caſe; he went from his Fathers Houſe *into a far Countrey.* Seneca.

Queſt. But how can any man be far from God, ſince God is every where? *Whither ſhall I go from thy Spirit, or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence?* And it's ſaid in *Job, There is no darkneſs* Pſal. 139 7. Job 34. 22.

where

where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

Acts 17.27. And saith the Apostle, *God is not far from every one of us*, either Christians or Gentiles.

Answ. There is a three-fold distance.

1. Of place; so no man can be at a distance from

Psal. 139.8. God; *If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there.*

2. There is a distance of nature, which is where there are opposite natures and dispositions: and so many, if not most men, are at a great distance from God; there is nothing of the Divine nature in them, they have different minds and wills from God's. God wills this or that; and they will the contrary. Many men make God's affirmative Commands negative, and his negative Commands affirmative.

Jeremiah told those Jews in *Jer.* 44. 16. that they should not go into *Egypt*; and they replied, *As to the words of the Lord thou hast spoken to us, we will not hearken to thee.*

3. There is a distance as to grace and favour; and so God may be said to be far from men in his special grace; as when men have not the grace of God in them, nor the love of God, nor acquaintance and communion with God; God may be said to be far from them.

The presence of God with men must be measured by his grace and spirit in them; and not by his common favours, as riches, power, natural parts, means

Psal. 17.17. of grace, yea common grace: for heathens may have some of these, and hypocrites may have others, and yet both at a distance from God, as to saving grace; God cannot say of them as of *Abra-*

Isa. 41.8. *ham, Abraham my friend*, my familiar. A blind man

man may be near the Sun, and yet be ſaid to be a-far off, becauſe he wants the light of it; ſo it is with many men who live in the light of the Goſpel, and yet are far from God as to any ſaving knowledge of him in Chriſt. A man may be your next Neighbour, and yet be as far from kindred, as the fartheſt in the Town.

The Lord judges men near to him, or afar off, by their hearts; *Take heed leſt there be in any of you an heart of unbelief to depart from the living God.* An Hypocrite may be nearer God's people in outſide ſimilitude, than a Publican. As a painted Pot on the wall is nearer a Pot in outward ſimilitude than a piece of Clay under your feet, and yet in fitneſs the Clay is nearer, becauſe it is apter to be made a Pot; ſo an humble Publican and Sinner is nearer coming into the Kingdom of God than a proud Phariſee or Hypocrite, becauſe his heart is more tender, and humbled under the ſenſe of ſin and wrath: *The Publicans and the Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.* Heb.3.12. Mark 21.31.

Now the reaſon of mens going from God as far as they can, *i. e.* by nature, is the enmity that is in man's ſinful nature to God; though God become nigh to our nature in his Sons aſſuming of it, yet naturally we keep at the greateſt diſtance from his nature, *i. e.* from his holineſs and purity: *The carnal mind is enmity againſt God; it is not ſubject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* *Reaſ.* Rom.8.7.

The Greek word ſignifies the beſt of a natural man is croſs to God; the more wiſdom and wit a natural man hath, the more croſſy he acts towards God. This enmity in man to God came in with his fall from God: Before *Adam* hid not himſelf φρόνημα.

from God, but was the friend of God by nature; his first nature, as *Abraham* was by grace; he could
James 2.23. lean on God's bosome as the beloved Disciple did on Jesus; he had the rays of the Divine nature in him,
2 Pet. 1.4. as men in a state of grace have; God made him to
Gen. 1. his own likeness, but when he fell from his innocency, his enmity against God came in.

A natural man cannot subject himself to the will of God, nor does he love the likeness of God; he
2 Tim. 3.4. is a lover of his own lusts more than of God. The Psalmist speaks of *haters of God*, Psal. 81. 15. and so doth the Apostle, *Rom.* 1.30. They care not for acquaintance with God, *verse* 28. yea, there are men that could wish there were no God.

Application.

1. This is useful to examination, to try our selves, whether we be near God, or gone far from him: And trial in this case is of great concernment to us; for we may be near to God outwardly, and in a profession of him, yet inwardly be at a distance from him; as those Jews were in *Isa.* 29. 13. *This people draw near me with their mouths, and with their lips honour me, but have removed their heart*
Heb. 3.12. *far from me.* We must estimate our nearness to, or distance from God, by our hearts. Therefore

1. Is God great or small, high or low, in our hearts account, in himself, and his word, and his works, especially as he is a holy God? If God be
Psal. 104.34. not much in our thoughts, and dear in our thoughts,

as

as to *David*, it's a ſign that we are far from God. Out of mind out of ſight. What's the reaſon that the Stars ſeem ſo little to us, that are ſuch great Bodies in themſelves, but becauſe they are at a great diſtance from us, and we from them? ſo God is a great God, *glorious in holineſs, fearful in praiſes*; *his loving kindneſs better than life it ſelf.* And if he be not ſo in our thoughts, and to our hearts, it argues we are far from him; for were we nigh him, the pleaſures, the profits, the honours of the world would be but trifles to us; theſe would be far from our hearts if God was near them. *I have rejoyced in the way of thy teſtimonies as much*, and doubtleſs *more, than in all riches: I love thy Commandments above gold, yea above fine gold.*

Exod. 15. Pſal. 63. 3.

Pſal. 119. 127.

2. We may know our diſtance from God by the chilneſs and coldneſs of our minds and affections in his ſervice and ways. As in Winter, when we are at a farther diſtance from the Sun, days art ſhort, and nights long, we are cold, and it is a dead ſeaſon with all things: Why ſo when we are dull and dead-hearted in holy imployments, and walk dully as to acts of grace and comfort, it ſignifies that we are at a diſtance from God, and he from us, as to his gracious and quickning preſence.

3. Men may be known to be far from God by their ſecure ſinning, and ſinning without ſenſe. The holy Apoſtle gives three ſigns of men that are greatly remote from God, and they are deſperate ſigns. 1. Their groſs ignorance of God: 2. Their ſinning without feeling: 3. Their ſinning with greedineſs: *Having their underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their*

Eph. 4. 18, 19.

hearts, who being paſt feeling, have given themſelves over to laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs.

When men ſin with greedineſs, it's a ſign they are paſt feeling, and when they are paſt feeling, it's a ſign they know not God, and this is a ſign, they are alienated from the life of God, and ſo are at the greateſt point of diſtance from him.

O that men could bewail this curſed diſpoſition, to be willing to be ſtrangers to God, and to be as far from him as they can; they will go from God to the
1 Sam. 28. Devil as *Saul* did: Many men fly from God, as from a Lion, and fly to Satan, who is indeed a *roaring*
1 Pet. 5. 8. *Lion, ſeeking whom he may devour.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Repreſenteth, how natural men are driven further from God by all the good he doth for them; whence it is thus; and what Uſes are to be made hereof; from the ſame Clauſe,

And took his Journey into a far Countrey.

I Have done with the firſt Doctrine from this Clauſe of the 13*th.* Verſe: I now proceed to the ſecond, which is this,

That whatever good God beſtowes on natural men, it drives them the further from him. Doct. 2.

The more the Sun ſhines on the Dunghil, the more it ſtinks. This baſeneſs is in every man by nature; *Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth, for the Lord hath ſpoken; I have nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have rebelled againſt me.* The Lord calls heaven and earth to witneſs in this ſtrange caſe; Iſa. 1. 2.

which,

which, as it is an Apoſtrophe to Angels, and all the Gentile world, concerning the Jews; ſo may it alſo imply, that the whole Creation, even of ſenſleſs Creatures, are (as I may ſay) more obedient to God than natural men are.

Numb. 20. 8. Pſal. 105. 31.

Moſes in *Deut.* 32. 15. charges *Iſrael* thus; *Jeſhurun waxed fat, and kicked: Thou art waxed fat &c. Then he forſook God which made him, and lightly eſteemed the rock of his ſalvation.* This people were worſe towards God after their wonderful deliverance from *Egypt* than before, and worſe in *Canaan* than in the Wilderneſs. The Lord made no ſuch complaints of *Saul*, as after he made him King; then *Saul* ſo miſcarried, as *It repented the Lord that he had made him King:* And we may find many inſtances beſides *Saul.*

1 Sam. 15. 11.

1. Look into the world, and you ſhall ſee many men of great parts and learning to imply them againſt God, rather than for him; their learning ſerves them to reaſon againſt God and Chriſt and the Spirit, and the Scriptures, and againſt the Lord's day, and the Saints; as the Lord ſaid to *Chaldea, Thy wiſdome and thy knowledge hath perverted thee; and thou haſt ſaid in thy heart, I am, and none elſe beſides me.* And the Apoſtle to the *Corinthians* ſaith, *The world by wiſdom knew not God.* Their great parts, natural and acquired, made them the more ignorant of God: *Willingly ignorant*, as St. *Peter* ſaith.

Iſa. 47. 10.

1 Cor. 1. 21.

2 Pet. 3. 5.

2. As ſome uſe their fine naturals, ſo others their neat morals againſt God: Their morality makes them to reaſon againſt thorow convictions of ſin, and againſt deep humiliation for ſin; and they are loath to leave their own righteouſneſs to take ſanctuary

ctuary at Christs; their morals fill them with self-esteem, to think of themselves as that Pharisee said of himself, *Luke* 18.11. *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, or even as this Publican; I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

Moral men are apt to dote upon self-righteousness like the Jews; of whom it's said, *They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.* Rom.10.3. There is a Meiosis in the last sentence, a gentler word is used than might have been; for whereas he saith, they *have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God*, he means they have zealously opposed it.

3. There are many who abuse their health, and wealth, and strength, and beauty, and dignity, and turn all against God. When he gave *Israel* Corn and Oyl, and Wine, and multiplied their Silver and Gold, *they prepared it for Baal*; or made the Idol *Baal* of it. Hos.2.8. Natural men do usually make all the kindness which the Lord sheweth them, to be fewel for their lusts; they *spend all upon their lusts*, as St. *James* saith. James 4.3.

That *goodness of God* which should lead them to repentance, keeps them from it, and hardens them against it. Rom.2.4.

4. Natural men are too apt to turn God's Ordinances and means of grace against him; as the Scribes and Pharisees would *neither go into the Kingdom of Heaven themselves, nor suffer those that were entring to go in.* Matth. 23.13. Christ's offers of himself to many men make them resist the more; *All*

the

Rom.10.21. *the day long have I ſtretched out my hands unto a gainſaying people.*

5. They turn his greateſt deliverances God hath wrought for them againſt him; *Jer.* 7. 10. *Ye come and ſtand before me in this Houſe, which is called by my Name, and ſay, we are delivered to do all theſe abominations.*

6. Many imploy the power which God hath given them againſt his word, and ways, and people: this is plain, if we look upon many, if not moſt of the powers of the world; God gives them power to be a terrour to evil works, and they make it a terrour to good.

Rom.13.

Our bleſſed Saviour foretold this to his Diſciples, Matth.10.18. *Ye ſhall be brought before Governours and Kings* Mark 13. *for my ſake; and in the Synagogues ye ſhall be beaten.* And thus we ſee that God's goodneſs to many men makes them the worſe; they abuſe his lovely attributes, as his mercy and patience, to more eagerneſs in ſinning: Eccleſ.8.11. *Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the heart of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil.*

Reaſons

Reaſons of the Point

1. Now this comes to paſs from the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin in men, inſomuch as ſin by the Commandment becomes exceeding ſinful; ſin was more exaſperated by the Commandment which was to reſtrain it. Some men are of ſuch a ſtrange conſtitution, that their Phyſick works quite contrary to the Phyſicians meaning; as it is a ſaying, That the Bee ſucks honey, but the *Spider poiſon* out of ſweet Herbs. O the vile and baſe nature of ſin! Rom. 7. 13.

Reaſ. 2. Becauſe men are prone to aſcribe to themſelves the good things they receive from God: *They ſaid not, where is the Lord that brought us up out of the Land of* Egypt. Men attribute that to their own power or parts, which belongs to God. This the Lord knew, when he would not let *Gideon* and *Iſrael* beat and conquer the *Midianites* with a great force; *Leſt Iſrael vaunt themſelves againſt me, ſaying, Mine own hand hath ſaved me.* Jer. 2. 6. Judges 7. 2.

And ſaith the Lord to the ſame people, *Deut.* 8. 12, 14, 17. *Beware leſt when thou haſt eaten, and art full, and haſt built goodly houſes, and thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy ſilver and thy gold is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of* Egypt, &c. *And then ſay in thine heart, My power, and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.*

Application of the Point.

1. This tells us how little reason there is to exalt and magnifie the nature of man, and man's naturals in order to grace, as some men do. For man by nature is a most disingenuous Creature; he is prone to be worse towards God, by all the good that God does him. What the Lord said to *Israel*, he may say to all natural men very often, Deut. 32. 6. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?* Observe the ill requital; God was *their Lord, their Father, their Maker, their Redeemer, their Establisher:* And *Israel* was *foolish, unwise, corrupt, perverse, and crooked.* So that there is more reason to debase, than exalt the nature of man, in his behaviour towards God and his grace. A disingenuous nature in man towards man sounds Isa. 5. 4. harsh; much more towards God. *What could I have done more for my Vineyard that I have not done? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?* Psal. 106. 7. *They tempted God, and provoked him at the Sea, even at the red Sea;* where he wonderfully delivered them.

A natural man is an unthankful Creature to God; 2 Tim. 3. 2. this is one of his black marks, *unthankful.* This is his manner from his youth; he treads in the steps 1 Sam. 10. 18, 19. of unkind *Israel: I brought up* Israel *out of* Egypt, *and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians,*

and

and out of the hand of all Kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities, and your tribulations; yet ye have this day rejected your God.

It is said of *Amazia*, 2 *Chron.* 25. 14. That after God had given him a great victory over the *Edomites*, he brought their gods, and set them up to be his gods: A strange and sad requital of the strength which the Lord had lent him to conquer his enemies. And of *Uzziah* his Son it is said, That when God had marvellously helped him, till he was strong, *then his heart was lifted up, and he transgressed against the Lord his God.* 2 Chron. 26. 15, 16.

2. This bespeaks you all to observe and try your own spirits in this point. O if you, or any of you find upon observation, the goodness of God obliging to your hearts, and that you use to dedicate your Mercies to God, as *Hannah* did her Son; and your selves as well as your mercies, this is a good sign. 2 Sam. 3. Rom. 12. 1. Do you lay your selves below your mercies, as *Jacob* did? *I am less than the least of all thy mercies thou hast shewed unto thy servant:* Gen. 32. 10. And do you set God above your mercies, and above your selves also? *Let him do unto me what seemeth good unto him,* 2 *Sam.* 15. 26. And do you use to admire God when you see how mindful he is of you? saying in your hearts as *David* did, 2 *Sam.* 7. 18. *Who am I, O Lord God? or what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* Now you may conclude that you have more than meer nature in you, that you have grace, which is of the Divine Nature, which begins to exert it self here, in the everlasting imployment you shall have in heaven.

3. Yet becauſe you are not all ſpirit and grace here, but have ſinful fleſh, and *the fleſh luſting againſt the ſpirit*; therefore beware of the leaven of natural men, in turning God's goodneſs to you againſt him. Spiritual men may be carnal in ſome things: So good a man as *Hezekiah* may pride it after famous deliverances: And ſo holy a man as *Paul* may, if not prevented, be *exalted above meaſure, after the abundance of revelations.* And *David* may wax wanton and ſecure, when God hath *made his mountain ſtrong.*

1 Cor. 3. 1.
2 Chro. 32. 25.
2 Cor. 12.
Pſal. 30.

O take heed, Chriſtians; if your Portion here make you proud, becauſe it is great, or diſcontented becauſe it is little, as you think it, be ſure you ſhall come under Providences to humble you, and bring you to your ſelves. O let grace watch the corruption of nature, and uſe its power over it; for God giveth more grace, grace that is too ſtrong for the corruption of nature; but if good days carry you from God, be ſure that evil days ſhall bring you back.

James 4. 6.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

Which ſheweth, How unſerviceable every man, in his natural eſtate, is to God; from the laſt Clauſe of the 13th. Verſe,

And there waſted his Subſtance with riotous living.

WE are come now to the laſt Clauſe of the 13*th.* Verſe, what this younger Son did, when he came into the far Countrey; There he *waſted his ſubſtance with riotous living*: And the ſpiritual import of this will teach us many things.

And firſt, we may obſerve how this younger Son was worſe than that wicked and ſlothful Servant that hid his Talent, *Matth.* 25. 25. Though he improved not his Maſters goods, yet he did not waſte them: But this youngſter did; *He waſted his ſubſtance with riotous living:* From whence we may obſerve three ſeveral points of Doctrine; the firſt whereof ſhall be the ſubject of this Chapter, *viz.*

That

Doct. 1. *That a natural man is an unprofitable and an unserviceable Creature to God.*

He ſpoils all that goes through his hands; he *pollutes* the holy things of God, as thoſe Jews did *Mal.* 2. 7. He ordinarily takes the name of God *in vain* by his carnal, careleſs, cuſtomary performances, and dough-baked duties; *Ephraim is a Cake half-baked.* And for the outward good things he hath of God; theſe he *conſumes upon his luſts; the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life.* As the Gentile Nations had their ſeveral gods, ſo have natural men their ſeveral luſts; one pleaſure, another pride, another covetouſneſs, another intemperance, &c. Corruption of nature in natural men breaks out ſeveral ways in ſeveral perſons, as corruption of the blood and humours of the body, break forth in one diſeaſe in one man, and in another diſeaſe in another. All natural men have their particular luſts, on which they ſpend their Father's ſubſtance.

Hoſ. 7. 8.

James 4. 3. 1 John 2. 16.

Judges 10. 6.

They are all like *Oneſimus* before his Converſion, *unprofitable; They are together become unprofitable*, or rotten, as the Greek imports, and ſo good for nothing, as we ſay of a rotten Apple. It may be written on every natural man's grave, who lives and dies in that eſtate, *Here lieth the man that never did God one days good ſervice in all his life*; but empty, and void, and waſte: or if he did any good, it was to himſelf, and not to God.

Philem. 11. Rom. 3. 12.

Nahum 2. 10. Zach. 7. 5.

O

Other Creatures are more useful to man than natural men are to God: *The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass his Master's crib, but* Israel *doth not know*—— *Balaam's* Ass was more serviceable to God, than *Balaam* himself; what service he did, he did it by force, as *Pharaoh* was forced to desire *Moses* his prayers, and to confess he had sinned, and to let *Israel* go. Isa. 1. 3. Numb. 6. 22. Exod. 9. 27, 28. Exod. 12.

It is true, God may, and doth make use of natural men sometimes in some special service: As he made use of *Cyrus* to do his good pleasure, in releasing the Jews, and *returning them into their own Country*, and in their *laying the foundation of the Temple*. Isa. 44. 28.

So *Nebuchadnezzer* did the Lord a great peice of service against *Tyrus*, and he gave him *Egypt* for his hire: But alas, he intended no such thing as to do God service in the case, but satisfied his own *ambition and lust*. Ezek. 29. 18, 19. 20.

As the *Assyrian* was *the rod of God's anger* to punish his sinning people; *Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy*, to serve his own pride and cruelty, and not the will of God. *Zenacherib* indeed pretended the service of God, when he came up against *Jerusalem*, and the Cities of *Judah*; *Am I come up without the Lord against this Land to destroy it? The Lord said unto me, go up and destroy it*: But alas, his end was to destroy the Jews, and the God of the Jews also, as he had done the Idol gods of other Nations: *Where are the gods of* Hamath *and* Arphad? *Where are the gods of* Sepharvaim? *and have they delivered* Samaria *out of my hand? that the Lord should deliver* Jerusalem *out of my hand?* Isa. 10. 7. Isa. 36. 10. Vers. 18, 19.

All

All the actions of natural men are from ſelf-principles, and to ſelf-ends; and the ſervice they
Zach. 7. 5. do God, is for and to themſelves, as the Jews faſting ſeventy years was.

Reaſon. And the Reaſon why natural men are unſerviceable and uſeleſs Creatures to God is, becauſe they are branches without a root; they are ſeparated from God; they are in a far Countrey from God, as this Prodigal was from his Father: neither are they in Chriſt, branches in him. Now when branches are cut off from the Tree, they wither, and bear no fruit. Since the fall all men by nature are ſeparated from God, which was ſignified by *Adam*'s being thruſt out of Paradiſe, *Gen.* 3. ſo that now men by
Matth. 21. 19. nature are like the fruitleſs Fig-tree which Jeſus curſed: or they are that *wild Olive-tree* ſpoken of in *Rom.* 11. 17. If ſome natural men have the leaves of a Fig-tree, yet only leaves without fruit, as that Fig-tree was which our Lord Jeſus curſed. Natural men may have moral vertues, and a pro-
Job 19. feſſion of Religion; but *the root of the matter* is not in them, as *Job*'s phraſe is; that is, true grace, or the grace of ſincerity.

2 & 3 Gen. As when the earth loſt its bleſſing it was under at firſt, and came under a curſe, in the ſecond and third of *Geneſis*, then it brought forth thorns and thiſtles;
Gen. 3. 18. *Thorns and thiſtles ſhall it bring forth to thee.* Thus is it with men ſince the fall, and ſtill in a ſtate of nature; they bring forth thorns and thiſtles to God, as the earth doth to man, whilſt uncultivated.

Jer. 4. 3. In the Prophet *Jeremiah* they are compared to fallow ground: The French call it *Jaſh'res* from the Latin *Jacere*, becauſe it lieth idle, and brings not forth grain, but weeds, without the art of man.

Thus

Thus is it with natural mens hearts till grace alter them; they are fallow or idle ground, and bring not forth fruit to God: They are void and waſte ground, as it's ſaid of *Nineveh*, *Nahum* 2. 10.

Application.

1. This informs us of the excellency of a ſtate of grace; in this ſtate men are uſeful to God, not in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech, for God needs no man: *Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wiſe may be to himſelf? If thou be righteous, what giveſt thou him?* Yet God is pleaſed to accept of his people as a uſeful people to him, *Veſſels of honour ſanctified, and meet for the maſter's uſe, and prepared to every good work.* Job 22. 2. & 35. 7. 2 Tim. 2. 21.

As its ſaid in *Pſal.* 113. 6. that the Lord *humbled himſelf, to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth*: ſo is the Lord pleaſed to humble himſelf in owning himſelf to have need of his people, as our Lord Jeſus bad his Diſciples (if any aſked about their looſing the Aſs and the Colt) to ſay, *The Lord hath need of them.* Matth. 21. 3.

It is true, all they do for him, or give to him, is of his own; *Thou haſt wrought all our works for us.* And *of thine own have we given thee.* Saints are uſeful Creatures to God. *O Lord, truly I am thy ſervant, I am thy ſervant*, ſays *David.* And as *David* ſaid thus to God, ſo God ſaid of *David*, *I have found* David *a man after mine own heart, which ſhall fulfill all my will. Godlineſs is profitable to all things*, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. Godly men and wo- Iſa. 26. 12. 1 Chro. 21. 14. Pſal. 116. 16. Acts 13. 22.

1 Chro. 12. 2. Psal. 37. 31. men are like those that came to *David* to *Ziklag*; they could use both the right hand and the left. 2 Tim. 3. 17. When a man hath the Word of God in his heart, as every man in a state of grace hath, he is throughly furnished to every good work.

The Saints are the Lord's *Eden*, they are his Garden, Cant. 4. 16. where he eats his pleasant fruit, and refresheth himself; we have the expression in *Exod.* 31. 17. Take heed therefore, you that have grace, that you fail not in your usefulness to God.

2. This should humble natural men, if they had any sense and feeling of their state, that they should be so unserviceable and useless Creatures to God. Many a godly man, though he do bear fruit unto God; yet not bearing so good, and so much as he Is. 56. 3. would, and thinks he should, he calls himself *a dry tree*; he cries out, *O my leanness, my leanness.*

But natural men that are fallow ground, their soul is a wilderness, waste ground, an empty vine, or Hos. 10. 1. that *bringeth forth fruit only to himself*, as it's said of *Israel*: he is his own *Alpha* and *Omega*, beginning and end; and yet he hath no sense of his great sin and disingenuity herein.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

Sheweth, that a natural man is an unprofitable Creature to himself. The several Uses that are to be made hereof. And how the Sins of Self-will and Self-seeking, the great Causes hereof, may be known; from the same Clause of the 13th. Verse,

And there wasted his Substance with riotous living.

I Have done with the first Doctrine from this last Clause of the 13. Verse, *viz. That a natural man is an unprofitable and unserviceable Creature to God.* I proceed to a second from the same words, which is this,

That a natural man is an unprofitable Creature to himself, as well as to God. Doct. 2.

He wasteth his Substance in a far Country. No

Prov. 9. 12. natural man is wise for himself; he may be wise in his time, as the World counts wisdom. Our Saviour saith, Luke 16. 8. *The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light*; *i. e.* in their contrivances for the things of this world.

But this is wisdom from beneath, such as the Serpent is, and teacheth: For indeed no man is truly wise for himself, who is not wise and a forecaster for eternity; Mark 8. 36. *What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and to lose his own soul?* And as are his profits, such are his pleasures; Heb. 12. 25. *the pleasures of sin for a season:* They will be 2 Sam. 2. 26. *bitterness in the end*, as *Joab* said of the Sword.

Whatever natural men possess, health or wealth, or parts, or power, yea, or means of grace, they use them not to their true advantage in the end: When their accounts are cast up, it will be found that all is wasted, they have laid up nothing for their eternal comfort, but die infinitely in God's debt: and unless mercy and free grace forgive them and God put their debt on Christ's account, as *Paul* did *Onesimus* his, Philem. on his own, they must lie in prison for ever. Every man that dies in his natural state, John 8. *dieth in his sins*; he dieth Rev. 3. 17. *poor, and miserable, and naked*: as our first Parents when they had Gen. 3. sinned, they saw themselves naked within as well as without; they saw a strange sight of themselves; they were afraid of themselves, as well as of God; Jer. 20. they were *Magor-missabib*, as *Pashur* was, *a terrour to themselves*; so will all natural men be, dying such.

Hos. 12. 1. *They labour in the fire*; they sow folly, and reap misery; they feed upon the wind, and at length the Lord speaks to them out of the whirl-wind;

They

They shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. Prov. 1. 31.

Those of them that make a fair shew in the world, their glut of these worldly things will prove a deadly surfeit to them, as *Israels* fill of flesh did to them. Numb. 11. 20. Psal. 106. 15. Death is in the pot of every natural man; and all their plenty and pleasure here will in the end be like that *Manna* which the *Israelites* kept till morning, which rotted and stank. Exod. 16. 20.

Reason of the Doctrine.

Now the Reason why natural men are unprofitable Creatures to themselves is, because their selves, and the satisfying of their lusts, is the beginning and end of all their seekings and gettings. What God gives them, they use not to him, but to themselves, to feed their pride, or covetousness, or intemperance, or revenge: Some lusts or other are fed with all they have.

As whatever a man or woman eats that hath an Ulcer or Cancer in their bodies, feeds those sores; so does a natural man's estate, power, pleasure, yea his profession of Religion, all feed his lusts.

Natural mens lusts are their rule and their end; they *fashion themselves according to their lusts.* It is natural to men to do *that which is good in their own sight.* Nothing will be restrained from them that they have imagined, as the Lord said of the builders of *Babel*, if they may have their own wills. They say as *Pharaoh*, *Our lusts shall be satisfied*, *Exod.* 15. 9. 1 Pet. 1. 14. Judges 17. 6. Gen. 11. 6.

Now

Now when a man's own luſts are his rule and his end in all, God will curſe and blaſt all his works and ways in the end; he will not give his glory to another, nor his will neither. Therefore did not the Lord make any account of the Jews their ſeventy years faſting in Captivity, becauſe they faſted not to him, but to themſelves. This Prodigal in the Text was all for himſelf, and his own luſts, nothing for his Father, or his Father's houſe; he was for a far Countrey, and there he waſted and conſumed all.

Iſa. 42. 8.

Zach. 7. 5.

At firſt man would have had a parity with God, *ye ſhall be as gods* —— O this took much with them. This was *Lucifer*'s language, *I will be like the moſt high.* It is ſpoken of the Babylonian Monarch; yea, man hath pride enough in his nature to prefer himſelf above God, to think himſelf wiſer than God, and juſter than God. As a King of *Spain* ſaid, as Hiſtory tells us, *That if he had been at the Creation, he could have ordered ſome things better.*

Iſa. 14. 13.

Alphonſus.

How did *Sennacharib* exalt himſelf above the Lord! *Who are they among all the gods of theſe lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord ſhould deliver* Jeruſalem *out of my hand?* He thought himſelf of more might than the Almighty. Thus is man by nature great in his own eye, and his own way good, yea the beſt; and hereupon he is ſo good a friend to himſelf, as to undo himſelf; *Thy way and thy doings have procured thee theſe things.*

Iſa. 36. 20.

Jer. 4. 18.

Ap-

Application.

1. This ſhews us the ſad Condition of meer natural men, in that their wit, and wealth, and honour, and all their contrivances dwindle away into vanity, as fire doth into ſmoke; as that rich fool's Barns did, when it was ſaid unto him, *Thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee.* They find at the end, that their accounts fall altogether ſhort of their expectations; their diſappointments amaze them, like theirs *Hag.* 1.6. *Ye have ſown much, and brought in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.* Poor natural man, he chooſes his own ways, but to his own confuſion: As *Saul* ſaid to his ſon *Jonathan*, *Thou haſt choſen the ſon of* Jeſſe *to thine own confuſion.* At laſt, if his condition change not, he will ſay of all his poſſeſſions, and parts, and projects, and pleaſures, as *Haman* did of all his, *All this availeth me nothing.* All falls into a little gelly, as Star-like Meteors in the Air do. So unprofitable a Creature is a natural man to himſelf; he is ignorant of the true riches, and ſo hath cheated himſelf with a meer phantaſm of happineſs, as the holy Ghoſt calls *Agrippa*'s and his Queens great pomp in which they came into the Court, they entred μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας, *with great phancy.*

Luke 12. 20.

1 Sam. 20.30.

Eſth. 5.13.

Acts 25.23.

2. Learn

2. Learn we hence, what a deſtructive thing it is to men to walk in their own ways, to make themſelves and their luſts the rule and end of their practice. This young man had much ruined himſelf this way. It was God's heavy Judgment on the world of the Gentiles, when he ſuffered them to walk in their own ways: and it was the like Judgment on the Jews, when *he gave them up to their own hearts luſt*, and *they walked in their own counſels*. This ſelf-will and ſelf-endednes is the plague of moſt mens hearts, even in theſe laſt days. ----*Men ſhall be lovers of their own ſelves*, and *lovers of pleaſure*, or their own luſt, *more than of God*. O this ſelf in our actions natural, civil, or religious, conſumes all our good: It is to mens moſt ſpecious converſations and accomplishments, as the worm was to *Jonah*'s Gourd, withers all.

Acts 14.16.

Pſal. 81.12.

2 Tim. 3.2,4.

There may be leaves, but no fruit, when gathering time comes. This is the reaſon why many, when they come to die, have ſo little comfort, yea ſo much diſcouragement in the reflections they make on their lives.

3. Therefore in the third place, this point ſerves to Inſtruction. If you would be wiſe for your ſelves, and reap profit and comfort from your ways, keep corrupt ſelf out of doors; elſe all the good you think you do for your ſelves will be your death, as that part of *Annanias* his goods he kept back from the Church was his. O learn and labour to have God in your eye, and to intereſt him above your ſelves in all your ways and undertakings, and then you'l make ſomething of them; you will be ſure to have your ſhare in the fruit. Nothing will be loſt this way, no not that which may ſeem to be loſt;

Acts 5.5.

loſt; *He that loſeth his life for my ſake, ſhall find it.* Mark 10. 39.

We count what we lay out in Land is not waſted, we ſhall have comings in by it; but what men or women lay out in intemperance in Meat, and Drink, and Apparel, that vaniſheth into nothing, or worſe. Thus ſo much of our time, and gifts, and eſtate we lay out for, and to God, will be as Land and Subſtance to us; we ſhall have our comings in that will exceed our layings out: But all we lay out on our luſts, it is conſumed; and all we lay out meerly for ſelf-ends, is all waſte. There may be the profits and *pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon*, as *Heb.* 11. but in the end we ſhall meet with the ſting of the Bee; and all, like *Moſes*'s Rod, will turn into a Serpent. And James 4. 3.

Conſider firſt, If your ſelves be your rule and end in your ways, you are not for God's uſe, and ſo he'l lay you aſide; he will eſteem you as broken Veſſels, wherein is no pleaſure, as he did *Coniah*; *The Lord ſets apart the man that is godly for himſelf.* The man that will eye God, and concern God in all he does, this is *a man after God's heart*, as *David* was. Jer. 22. 28. Pſal. 4. Acts 23. 22.

If a Veſſel into which you put Bear, ſours or diſtaſts it, you'l lay it by till it be ſweeter, and uſe another. Why did God repent that he had made *Saul* King? becauſe he ſaw he was for himſelf in his ways and actions, and not for God. Yea, 1 Sam. 15.

2. While men make themſelves their rule and their ends in their actions, in their particular Callings, or Profeſſion of Religion, they ſet themſelves in God's room; and how will God take this? We ſee how God took our firſt Parents attempting to be as gods.

God may make one man to be inſtead of God to another in ſome ſenſe, as he made *Moſes* to *Aaron*; but no man may be inſtead of God to himſelf, which he is, while his own will is his rule, and himſelf is the chief end of his works and ways.

Exod. 4. 16.

All God's own actions are for himſelf, becauſe there is none above himſelf, or like himſelf. God's holineſs and righteouſneſs lies much in willing his own glory; for he ſhould do himſelf wrong if he ſhould give it to another, there being none beſides himſelf capable of it. And ſo our holineſs and righteouſneſs lies much in improving all we are or have to and for God chiefly; none of our actions may terminate in any created being; they may not fall ſhort of God and his glory, as their main ſcope. As *Joab* would have *David*, and not himſelf to have the honour of taking *Rabbah*: ſo ſhould we do by God; He is all in all in heaven, and ſo he ſhould be on earth.

Prov. 16. 4. Iſa. 42. 8. 1 Cor. 10. 31. 2 Sam. 12.

3. The meaneſt of actions that have God for their bias and mark, hereby become glorious actions; and as mean as they be to the eye of the world, if it be but *the giving a cup of cold water* —— Chriſt will have as great care ſuch actions ſhall not be loſt, as he had of the fragments of the miraculous bread and fiſh with which he fed many thouſands; he would have all gathered up, and none loſt. A reward in heaven is the fruit the meaneſt actions bear which are thus terminated: They are more glorious things in the eye of God than an Angel's tongue, or a faith of Miracles. Theſe are actions that will follow their Agents to heaven; ſuch actions and works as are wrought in God, and for God, will follow a man to God; *his works ſhall follow him*: They do not

Matth. 14. 1 Cor. 13. 1. Rev. 14. 13.

not go before him, to make way for him; Christ's works alone have this honour: but they shall certainly follow him, and *be to praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*; as St. *Peter* faith of the faith of Saints. 1 Pet. 1. 7.

The Reason why I am so large on this matter is, because a man's dedicating his ways and works to his own will and end, is the reason, as you have seen, why natural men are so unprofitable Creatures to themselves.

Quest. But how shall we know whether God or our selves be our main rule and end in all our ways and actions? *Quest.*

Answ. 1. Observe what it is that puts you upon good actions, and that sweetens your labour and pains therein: If your own credit, or profit, or other outward self-advantages, then your selves are your main end, and not God: But if the will of God, and glory of God, pleasing of God, and injoying of God bear sway, and be the wings that carry you on; not your selves, but God is your supream end: As the pains that the people took in *Psal.* 84. in going from all parts of the Land to *Jerusalem*, was to *meet God in Zion.* *Answ.*

2. Observe where you mostly look for reward in your religious and good works. If from men, you are your own ends: if from God, God is your end, especially if you look at God himself for your reward. The Nurse looks not for a reward of her care from the Child, but the Mother: And so when you look for your reward from God, and not men, you quit your selves from the Spirit of an hypocritical Pharisee, and have an argument for your sincerity, and that God is your mark and motive. Gen. 15. 2.

3. Obſerve what it is wherein thy heart reſteth it ſelf in thy paſſage through this world: If it be for that thou haſt eſtate enough, or repute with men enough, or a ſufficiency of other fleſh-pleaſing circumſtances, it is a ſign thou art thine own end; like that rich man in the Goſpel, who ſang to himſelf, Soul, take thine eaſe, thou haſt much goods laid up for many years: but if thou haſt no hearts eaſe longer than thou haſt God's preſence, or reſteſt upon him, and art laying out thy ſelf in his ſervice, and for his glory, thou maiſt reckon upon it that God is thy great end. This was the great content of Chriſt's heart, *That he did always the things that pleaſed his Father:* and, *Father, I have glorified thee on earth.*

Luke 12.
John 8. 29.
John 17. 4.

Our Lord Jeſus, even as the Son of man, was much better than the Angels; yet not his own, but his Fathers will was his rule, *John* 6. 39. and his Fathers glory his high end; *What ſhall I ſay? Save me from this hour. Father, glorifie thy Name.* This was the comfort of Jeſus Chriſt, when he went out of this world; *Father, I have glorified thee on earth.*

Heb. 1. 4.
Joh. 12. 27, 28.

O my Brethren, this is one of the greateſt points in religion, to look what is your great end in Religion, and in all your converſation in this World, your ſelves or God: if your ſelves, you will have a blaſt on all you do; do you never ſo much, you do but waſte your Subſtance your Father hath given you, as this younger Son did; *You labour for that which ſatisfieth not.* But if God be your motive and your end, you may be ſure you labour not in vain, nor ſpend your ſtrength for nought, for *your judgment is with the Lord, and your reward with your God.*

Iſa. 55. 2.
Iſa. 49. 4.

Here

Here is the excellency of grace, that it lifts up your eyes much to God: as it's the excellency of man's body above that of other living Creatures, in being made erect; his own figure teaching him to lift his eyes and thoughts up to heaven. Look upon it as an evidence and excellency of grace in your souls, that they are thereby much carried up to God; *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul,* was much in *David's* mouth. And it was the use of our Lord Jesus *to lift up his eyes to heaven, Joh.* 17. 1. & 11. 41.

Psal. 25. 1. Psal. 86. 4. Psal. 143. 8.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

Sheweth, that when men forſake God, he gives them up to the height of ſinning; from the ſame Clauſe,

And there waſted his Subſtance with riotous living.

THERE is yet a third Doctrine from this laſt Clauſe of the Thirteenth Verſe, *viz.*

Doct. 3. *That when men depart from God, and caſt off his fear and counſel, then he gives them up to the height of ſinning.*

When this younger Brother got from under his Father's eye into a far Countrey, there he lived in all exceſs of riot; he lived riotouſly. And what a life
1 Pet. 4 3,4. that is, St. *Peter* tells us; a living in *laſciviouſneß, luſt, exceſs of wine, revellings, &c.* This was the caſe of the Jews, when they hearkened not to the Lord's voice, and would have none of him, he then
Pſal. 81. 11,12. *gave them up to their own hearts luſt*——
We ſee the caſe alſo exemplified in the Gentiles,
Rom. 1. 24,26, 28. when they regarded not God, nor liked to retain him

him in their knowledge, he gave them up *to uncleanneſs* through the luſts of their own hearts, and *unto vile affections*, and *unto a reprobate mind, to do thoſe things which are not convenient.* As *Ahab ſold himſelf to work wickedneſs*, 2 *Kings* 21. And others gave themſelves over to laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs, being *led captive by the Devil at his will*, 2 *Tim.* 2.

Eph. 4.19.

2 Tim. 2.26.

And ſuch men are within a few ſteps of the ſtate of the Devils, becauſe they ſin wilfully and greedily: There is not only their will in their ſinning, but wilfulneſs and obſtinacy. *As for the word thou haſt ſpoken to us in the Name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; but we will certainly do whatſoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouths.* It's true, that not only natural men, but ſuch who have grace, do ſin; but not ſuch ſins as theſe ſin, nor any ſins in ſuch a manner. A godly man may ſin a great and groſs ſin, but he is tempted to it, and overtaken with it. It was *Satan* that *provoked* David *to number the people*, 1 *Chro.* 21.1. And *Satan ſifted Peter* when he fell ſo foully.

Jer. 44. 16, 17.

Gal. 6. 2.

Luke 22.

And beſides, they greatly afflict their ſouls for ſuch ſins: David *watered his Couch with his tears*, and writ many penitential Pſalms; and Peter *wept bitterly.* I, but natural men, eſpecially thoſe who are given up to their own luſts by the juſt Judgment of God, they ſin almoſt any ſins with delight; *They rejoyce to do evil*, and *delight in the frowardneſs of the wicked, that will not endure any reproof*; as many in theſe looſe times rejoyce to make men, and ſee men drunk. And the Apoſtle in the firſt to the *Romans*, *v.* 29, 30, 31. ſpeaking of the moſt dreadful ſins committed by men, ſpeaks of men that *not only*

Mark 26.

Prov. 2.14.

do

do them, but take pleasure in them that do them. Now the more will and affection there is for sin, the more sinful it is. It is more the manner, than matter of sin, that shews the state of the heart. Sin considered simply is not the brand of a reprobate; for none of the Elect are without sin in this life. It's willing and wilful sinning that denotes a wicked man. If the greatest sinner be upon the returning point to God, sin will not damn him; *Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.*

1 Joh. 2. 8.

Ezek. 18. 30.

Application.

1. This may be for a lamentation, that in our times there are so many desperate sinners that waste their Substance, not only their wealth, but their health, their parts and places, and all the Lord hath intrusted them with, they waste all in riotous living. Do we see great men great sinners? we have no need to envy their greatness, but to pity their great sinfulness and folly. Such practical Atheists St. *Paul* speaks of to *Titus* 2. 16. *They profess they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* And because they profess to know God, and Christ, and the Scriptures, their sin is the greater, as Christ said to the Jews.

2. This may much move you to admire and bless the Lord, whose will, and affections, and content, is taken off from all sin. It's as great a mercy, as that all your sins are forgiven you; for both are parts of the

the Covenant of grace. O look on it as mercy when God hedges up your way, when you are going out of his. Hoſ. 2. 7.

Art thou fearful when thou ſinneſt? bleſs God for ſo much mercy. Doth thy heart ſmite thee when thou haſt ſinned? bleſs God that ſenſe of ſin is not taken from thee. Hath God took away pleaſure from thy ſinning? bleſs God thou art ſo far delivered from ſin. How many ſinners are paſt feeling, and given up to a reprobate mind in ſinning?

Queſt. But may not ſuch a ſinner be converted?

Anſw. It is not impoſſible; the caſe is very dangerous, though not utterly deſperate. Converſion hath been the happy lot of the worſt of Heathens; and Publicans and Harlots were converted, and believed. Matth. 21. 31, 32. But when men pretend to know God, and to believe in Chriſt, and yet are greedy ſinners, and ſin without feeling, their caſe is more hopeleſs, and they are very near that heavy ſentence, *He that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill.* Rev. 22. 11. But when men come to feel a bitterneſs in ſin, and their conſcience cannot bear with it, there is now ſome hope. Thus much for the the thirteenth Verſe.

CHAP. XVII.

Wherein is shewed, That great pain and sorrow do always follow the pleasures of sin. With Meditations hereupon by way of Use; from the fourteenth Verse,

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land, and he began to be in want.

IN the former Verse this younger Son, the Picture of every man by Nature, acted his part in sin; and in these Verses we see him acting his part in sorrow: there we saw his *bravery*, here his *misery*. And here let us consider,

1. His misery it self in the fourteenth Verse; *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land; and he began to be in want.*

2. The Course he took for his relief, in the fifteenth Verse; *And he went and joyned himself to a Citizen*

Citizen of that Countrey: and he ſent him into his field to feed Swine.

3. The Ineffectualneſs of that Courſe in order to his relief, in the ſixteenth Verſe; *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the Swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.*

Firſt, Of his diſtreſs and miſery we have here expreſſed a double occaſion; 1. *He had ſpent all*; and 2. *There aroſe a mighty Famine in that Land.* He was diſtreſſed within and without: Within, for he had nothing of his own left; he had ſpent all his Subſtance, his whole Portion; all was gone: And without alſo; there was a Famine in the Land whither he was rambled from his Father's Houſe; ſo that he was ſtraitned on all hands. Though there had been a famine, if he had had ſomething of his own, his caſe had been tolerable; or though he had nothing of his own, had there not been a Famine in the Land, he might have had hopes of ſupply: but he is every way diſtreſſed, as thoſe Lepers were. *If we ſay, we will go into the City, the Famine is there,* 2 Kings 7. *and there we ſhall die: and if we ſit ſtill, we die alſo.* And obſerve, It is ſaid, *there aroſe*, or began, *a mighty Famine in the Land; and he began to be in want.* All his ſtraits were but the beginning of ſorrow, as Chriſt ſaid, when he had ſpoken of many ſore evils that would befall *Judea* and *Jeruſalem*; *All theſe are the beginnings of ſorrow.* So was Matth. 24. 8. it with this man's ſtraits; for like the flood, *they increaſed, and prevailed mightily* day after day, *Gen.* 7. The miſery of graceleſs men hath a beginning, but no end, if free grace diſpoſe not otherwiſe of it in their converſion, as it did in this Prodigal's Caſe. But we come to the ſpiritual things

which this part of the Parable means and intends.

1. This intimates to us, That great pain and ſorrow follows the pleaſures of ſin: firſt he ſpent all his Subſtance upon his luſt; and then he was in want, and hedged in with ſtraits.

2. It intimates to us, That when men leave God to ſhift for themſelves in this evil World (which is a far Countrey from God) they ſhall find a Famine therein; *i. e.* they ſhall find no ſatisfaction in the Creature: Let them have never ſo great a Portion, they ſhall have no ſatisfaction.

The firſt of theſe ſhall be the ſubject of this Chapter, *viz.*

Doct. 1. *That great pain and ſorrow follows the pleaſures of ſin.*

The ſweet of ſin is but for a ſeaſon, and ends in bitterneſs, as *Joab* ſaid of the Sword. Sin's beſt will be ſoon ſpent, and then comes its worſt; but this is not gone ſo quickly. The Bee hath a ſting as well as honey: There is a core in the forbidden Fruit, that will ſtick in a man's throat when he has eaten it. The pleaſures of ſin are not immortal things, but very flaſhes, and they go out like a Candle, with a ſtinking ſnuff. Roſes ſtay not always on the Tree, but are gathered, or wither, and ſhed, and then they leave prickles behind them.

Heb. 11. 25.

The pleaſantneſs of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was ſoon gone from *Adam* and *Eve*, and changed into nakedneſs, and fears, and amazement. When the affections have acted their part in ſin, then ſin acts its part on the Conſcience: yea when the pleaſing affections, love, deſire, delight, have had their

Gen. 3.

their time in ſin, then the bitter affections, grief, and ſorrow, and vexation, have their ſeaſon; and that for ever with many; *Cain*, and *Amnon*, and *Judas* are examples.

While *Belſhazzar* was drinking Wine in the golden Veſſels of the Temple, he ſaw that *hand-writing on the wall*, which made his *countenance change, and his thoughts trouble him, and all his joynts to tremble.* Sin will puniſh and plague men when they have ſpent their love upon it; *Thine own wickedneſs ſhall correct thee.* Dan.5.3,4,5,6 Jer.2.19.

And though a man have a long day of the pleaſure of ſin, yet that day will have a night; and if bitter repentance prevent not, that night will never have day more after it. As the Saints in heaven have no night, ſo the damned in hell have no day, but utter darkneſs. The pains of ſin have a longer ſeaſon than the pleaſures. *Rejoyce, O young man, in thy youth*, or youthful luſts, ſaith the Preacher, *and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the ſight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all theſe things God will bring thee to judgment.* Rev.21.25. Matth.8.12. Eccleſ.11.9.

And *Eccleſ.* 8.11. *Though a ſinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet it ſhall not be well with the wicked.* And *wo unto the wicked, it ſhall not be well with him; for the reward of his hands ſhall be given to him:* that is, God's unavoidable doom, *Rom.* 2.9. *Tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil. The end of theſe things is death.* Iſa.3.11. Rom.6.

If men might have the pleaſures of ſin on earth, and after have the pleaſures of God in heaven, the Scriptures would be diſproved, and Chriſt ſhould die

die in vain, and the Law curse sinners in vain, and upon the matter, God would be found a lyar; he
1 Joh. 5. 10. that believeth not God *hath made him a lyar*. And what a heap of blasphemies would these suppositions rise to?

Nay, if a righteous man should return to the
Ezek. 18. 24. pleasures of sin, God hath professed *that he should die, and not live*. If a righteous man could do the one, God would do the other. If Angels sin, they must not stay in heaven, but be damned. All the world cannot forbid the banns between the pleasures of sin and eternal sorrow, unless Conversion alter the case.

If *David* will have the pleasure of sin, he must
Psal. 6. 2, 3. have the pain of it too; his *flesh must wither*, *and*
Psal. 51. *his bones be broken*; *and his soul must be vexed in him*.

It's true, that our dear Lord Jesus Christ hath
Rom. 8. 1. taken off the sorrows of sin from the Saints so far,
Heb. 12. 16. as they are mortal; but not so far as they are medicinable. Though they are kept out of hell, yet they may be brought to the borders. Though the *Canaanites* shall not hinder *Israels* possessing of the good Land, yet they may give them great disturbance. It is convenient that sin should end in sorrow in the Elect in this life, that they may taste what sorrow Christ felt for their sins; and what sorrows the damned do, and shall feel there; that so they may learn to set a high price and value upon the pardon of their sins, and their escape from condemnation. O when a godly man's Conscience comes to feel the bitter that follows the sweet of any sin, this makes him a great admirer of the free grace of God.

Ap-

Application.

1. Let this be for a lamentation, That the world, yea much of the Christian world, should be so sottish as to buy the pleasures of sin for a season at such an excessive dear rate, as the hazard of eternal pains. This is like *Esau*'s selling his birth-right for a mess of Pottage. How can such men read or hear the Scripture in *Job* 21. 13. if they believe it, without horrour? *They spend their days in mirth* (so it is in the Margent) *and suddenly*, or in a moment, *go down into the grave*; and it may be into hell one part, before into the grave the other.

Satan is the *Prince of this world*, and the *god of this world* by usurpation; and he rewards his Subjects with the pleasures of this world, and lusts of this world, to fit them to be tormented with himself in the next. As *Abraham* said to *Dives*, *Remember, that in thy life time thou hadst thy good things*, the pleasures of this world; *but now thou art tormented.* John 14. 30. 2 Cor. 4. 4. Luke 16. 25.

The Devil could not tempt Christ with all the Kingdoms of the world; but he tempts thousands with the base lusts of the world: He puts many tricks and cheats upon poor sinners. He lessens and sweetens sin before, and in the act; but greatens and imbitters it afterwards.

He troubles not for sin before he have tempted men to it, and then he often falls on the Conscience, as he did on *Cain's*; *Mine iniquity is greater than can be forgiven*; and *the punishment of my sin is greater.* Gen. 4. 13.

greater than I can bear. Sin may be ſweet in the ſwallow, as ſome Vomits are; but then it torments when it is in the ſtomack, and brings up bitter ſtuff: But here is the miſery of it, that men will not believe till they feel, as *Thomas* his unbelief ſaid; *except I feel, and ſee, I will not believe.* Thoſe that tell men of theſe things, they ſeem to them as mockers, as *Lot* did to his Sons in Law, and ſay in their hearts as thoſe ſcoffing Jews at the Prophets threatning their ſins with judgments; *Let him make ſpeed, and haſten his work, that we may ſee it; and let the counſel of the holy one of* Iſrael *draw nigh, and come, that we may know it.*

John 20.

Gen. 19. 14.

Iſa. 5. 19.

It hath been an old practice of ſinners to flatter themſelves in the fulfilling their luſts; *I ſhall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart. He flattereth himſelf in his own eyes, till his iniquity be found to be hateful,* Pſal. 36. 2. Our bleſſed Saviour ſaith, that in the days before the flood, *they were eating and drinking, &c. and knew not till the flood came, and took them all away. And knew not!* Did not *Noah* forewarn them many years? Yes, but they did not regard or believe him, till they ſaw it: *Whoredome, and wine, and new wine, took away their hearts,* and reaſon, and ſenſes. *Thus men compaſs themſelves about with lies, and with the ſparks of their own fire;* with their own fond reaſonings and vain hopes. But what ſaith God to them? *This ye ſhall have at my hands, ye ſhall lie down in ſorrow.*

Deut. 29. 19.

Matth. 24.

Hoſ. 4. 11.

Hoſ. 11. 12.

Iſa. 50. 11.

St. *Paul* reckons this amongſt the ſins of the laſt times or days; *Men ſhall be lovers of pleaſures more than lovers of God.* They let their own luſts take place of God in their hearts. What is it to be lovers

2 Tim. 3. 4.

lovers of pleaſures more than lovers of God, but to follow a man's own luſts, rather than the will of God? When a man's pleaſures take him off, or put him by any duty that God commands him, why now he loves his pleaſure more than God: It's a plain conviction in the caſe.

For as *Faith works by love*, *Gal.* 5. 6. ſo love worketh by obedience. *If ye love me keep my Commandments.* So that when men will break through a Command of God to take their own pleaſure, now they are *lovers of pleaſures more than lovers of God.* But, *O ye ſimple ones, how long will ye love ſimplicity?* O turn ye at this days reproof; It's infinitely better to grieve and afflict your ſouls for ſin, than to take pleaſure in it. O ſorrow for ſin at preſent, that ye may not ſorrow by it for ever; unleſs you do the former, you muſt do the latter; unleſs you do ſorrow, you ſhall ſorrow, as he ſaid, *Periiſſem, niſi periiſſem*, I had been undone, if I had not been undone. Seek then to ſorrow for ſin with ſorrow that is to converſion, that ye may eſcape ſorrow for ſin that will be to your confuſion.

John 14. 15.

Prov. 1. 21.

Let me put this Queſtion to every ſuch perſon that takes pleaſure in their luſts that count it pleaſure *to riot in the day time; ſporting themſelves with their own deceivings; making proviſion for the fleſh.*

2 Theſſ. 2. 12. 2 Pet. 2. 13. Rom. 13. ult.

Let me ask theſe that queſtion which was asked thoſe Oppreſſors in *Iſa.* 10. 3. *What will ye do in the day of Viſitation? To ye think to eſcape the Judgment of God? Rom.* 2. 3. You muſt feel the bitter of ſin, as well as the ſweet: If I have done ſo and ſo, ſaith *Job*; *What ſhall I do when God riſeth up? and when he viſiteth, what ſhall I anſwer him?*

Job 31.

him? And if *Job* cannot, how canst thou? Thou wilt have nothing within or without to speak a good word for thee.

Thy affections will lothe the things that thou did so lust after, as *Amnon* did. And thy memory will be wormwood and gall to thee, as theirs was, *Lam.* 3.19. And thy Conscience will vex and trouble thee; it will be the Executioner of God's displeasure upon thee for thy pleasure taken, and sinful ways. And that Word of God which thou despisedst and rejectedst, will judge thee. And thy Companions in evil, that were wont to encourage and drill thee on to evil, they'l say to thee, as the High Priest did to *Judas* in his agony of Conscience, *I have betraied innocet blood; Caveat emptor; what's that to us? See thou to that.*

2 Sam. 13.

John 12. 48.

Mark 27.

Yea, every thing that thou expectest relief from in the day of thy sorrow, and bitterness of thy soul, all will say to thee, as the King of *Israel* did to that Widow which cried out, *Help, O King: If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I help thee?*

2 Kings 6.

And again, to take every man off from taking pleasure in sin, in sin that offers the most, let a man consider this, That there is more real evil in sin that appears most pleasing, than there is in all the sorrows and miseries of the world: therefore *Moses chose rather to suffer afflictions*, even the greatest tribulations *with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin*; And other Saints have chosen the greatest torments imaginable, rather than sin, or a sinful escape from them, *verse* 35, 36, 37.

Heb. 11.25.

And

And our Lord Jesus Christ, who was willing to be *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*, *Isa.* 53. 1. yea, to be made a curse, and to suffer the wrath of God, which was hell to his soul, so long as it lasted, and all to save his people from their sins: yet would he not have done the least sin himself, to have kept them from hell; *Who did no sin*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 22. *and knew no sin* (*i. e.*) by experience in himself: The former text explains the latter. He was willing to bear all their sins upon him, 1 *Pet.* 2. 24. but would not have the least of sin in him. *The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*

Mark 1.

2 Cor. 5. 21.

John 14. 30.

And so holy *Paul* groaned more under the weight of sin, than of all his sufferings; when in 2 *Cor.* 11. 23.---- he had numbred them to a great sum; *In stripes above measure; in prisons more frequent; in death oft*—— yet he could glory in these, *verse* 30. and take pleasure in them, as brave Souldiers do in their scars, as badges of honour. But when he speaks of sin that dwelleth in him, he groans grievously; *O wretched man that I am*——

2 Cor. 12. 11.

Rom. 7. 24.

A Saint is not well pleased with any sin, nor does he at any time rejoice in sin, as he usually doth in his sufferings for well-doing; as *Moses chose rather to suffer affliction, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin*, *Heb.* 11. 25. Sin of it self is misery; as God in himself is blessedness. There is bitterness in sin, as well as for sin. It is bitterness to the people of God, abstracted from its punishment; *Mine iniquities are a burthen too heavy to bear.* And sin is bitter to God himself: That in *Lam.* 2. 18. *I have rebelled against his Commandment*, may be read, I have made bitter his mouth. So in *Deuteronomy*, *Their*

Psal. 38.

Lam. 2. 18.

De ut. 32. 32.

grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: Their Vine was their sinful nature; and their grapes their sinful works; and these were bitter to God, to speak, as himself doth, after the manner of men.

There is more evil in sin, than in the punishment of it. Indeed sin it self is the greatest punishment that God inflicteth on sinners in this World: Because those Heathens sinned so greatly, therefore, as a punishment, *God gave them up to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind.* Their latter sins were the punishment of their former, without any unrighteousness in God: And therefore when the Apostle had spoken of Gods punishment God inflicted on them for their sins; *viz.* his giving them over to sin, he saith of it, ἣν ἔδει, it was that which was meet; *receiving in themselves that recompence of their errour which was meet*, in the 27*th. verse*. O how great is the evil of sin, when God makes sin the highest punishment of sin out of hell? *Because they received not the love of the truth; for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie.*

Rom. 1. 26, 28.

2 Thess. 2. 12.

Quest. But how can men take pleasure in sin, if sin be the greatest punishment of sin in this life?

Answ. Because whilst they are under the power of sin, it is no burthen to them, but pleasure: As a man that swims or dives under the water, feels it not a burthen, but pleasure to him; whereas if he went out of the water, the tenth part of that water on his shoulders would make him groan, and sink him down. And so when a man is delivered from under the dominion of sin, as he is when he cometh into a state of grace, those sins which were easie and pleasant to him before grace, are now the greatest trouble and vexation.

You

You ſee then how little reaſon men have to phanſy pleaſure in ſin, or to reckon themſelves happy when they may have their luſts; let not therefore our eyes dazzle at the men of this world, that have their full of the pleaſures of ſin, and have liberty and opportunity to fulfill their luſts. It was *Aſaph*'s infirmity, and *Jeremiah*'s too, to be troubled in their minds at ſuch a ſight. Pſal. 73. 12, 13. Jer. 12. 12.

Alas, all their pomp is but a phantaſy, as St. *Paul* ſaith of that of *Agrippa* and *Berenice*; ſo it is in the Greek: All is but a vain ſhew; as is a Dream when one awaketh; So, O Lord, *when thou awakeſt thou ſhalt deſpiſe their image.* Dreams of honour, and pleaſures, and riches, are not real, but imaginary things; men find it ſo when they awake out of their dreams. Acts 25. 28. Pſal. 39. Pſal. 73. 20.

Thus doth God make all theſe mens delight and pleaſure in their luſts, the luſts of the fleſh, the luſts of the eye, and the pride of life to be but imaginary delights in their own ſenſe and experience, when he awakens to Judgment, and awakens their Conſciences unto Judgment. 1 John 2. 16.

We ſhould therefore tremble at their courſes, as well as their ends. So did holy *Paul* at their debaucheries he ſpeaks of in *Philip.* 3. 19. *Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies to the Croſs of Chriſt, whoſe end is deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, and whoſe glory is in their ſhame, who mind earthly things.*

Theſe men ſeem like to *Leviathan*, made without fear; they laugh at mens threatnings, and God's threatnings for ſin, as *Leviathan* is ſaid to do at the ſhaking of a Spear. Theſe *ſpend their days in ſinful mirth,* Job 41. 33. Job 41. 20.

Job 21. *mirth, and in a moment go down to the grave*, or to hell. They have pleasure and mirth no where but on earth; not in the grave, for that is darkness and silence; not in hell, there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and they are sure to have none in heaven, for *no unclean thing comes there*. O that these would remember what Luke 16. Father *Abraham* said to *Dives*; *Son, remember that thou in thy life time hadst thy good things, but now thou art tormented*. Sins that have been sweet to the affections, will be bitter at length to the Conscience: Rev. 10. As St. *John*'s Book was *sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his belly*. O happy were men, if God did hedge Hos. 2. 6, 7. up the way from the pleasures in sin, as he did the Gen. 3. way of the Tree of Life from man by a flaming Sword.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

Manifesting, That whenever men set their hearts upon the things of this world, God makes them all empty and unsatisfactory to them: The several ways God takes to bring this to pass: And what use we are to make hereof; from the same fourteenth Verse,

> And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land, and he began to be in want.

I Have done with the first Doctrine from this Verse, *scil.* That great pain and sorrow do always follow the pleasures of sin. I next proceed to the second, which is this;

That when mens hearts go a whoring from God to the world, and the lusts of it, they meet with a famine or emptiness therein. Doct. 2.

That

That Scripture, *Psal.* 73. 27. is expreſs for it, and it's full of terrour; *For lo, they that are far from thee ſhall periſh: thou haſt deſtroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.* Where God is not, there is a Famin: This far Countrey is this preſent evil World; and God and this World are at a great diſtance: *Know ye not, that the friendſhip of this world is enmity with God? whoſoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* And in another place, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the luſts of the fleſh, the luſts of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but of the world.* When carnal men court the vanities of the world, they bid defiance to God; and God will be avenged on them, in making the things of the world, which they ſo court, to be vanity and vexation of ſpirit to them. When mens minds go a whoring from God after the world, and the things of the world, they meet with a mighty Famine.

Gal. 1. 4.

James 4. 4.

Object. But the men of this world have their Portion in this world, and *God fills them with his hid treaſure*; it may may be with ſilver, and gold, and other precious things digged out of the earth: And *they have more than heart could wiſh*; more than they once imagined they ſhould ever have had.

Pſal. 17. 14.

Pſal. 73. 7.

Anſw. Suppoſe this, and yet there may be a famine in the heart and mind; *In the fulneſs of his ſufficiency he ſhall be in ſtraits.* So it was with *Haman, Eſth.* 5. when he had told his wife and friends of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the King had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the Princes---- yet ſays he, *All this availeth me nothing*——So when

Job 20. 22.

Eſth. 5. 11.

when *Esau* said to *Jacob*, *I have enough Brother*, it was but a flourish; his heart said little enough. Gen.33.9.

2. God disables the Creature from satisfying any man, when he sets it in his heart instead of God. *Jonas* was exceeding glad of his gourd, *i. e.* overmuch; and presently a worm is sent to wither it. Jonah 4. When men *forsake the fountain of living waters*, they *hew them out broken Cisterns that can hold no water*. Jer.2.13. There is a lie in them: They are like salt meats, that increase a man's thirst. Prov.23.3. The more of the world, the more craving is the worldly heart: It is hydropical, still thirsting after something he hath not, or something more of what he hath.

Solomon is a famous instance in the case, and may be *instar omnium*, one for all. It is said of him, that *when he was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods*: And now he left God, as this Son did his Father's house, he went into a far Country; and setting his heart on the lusts of the world, he met with a mighty famine amongst all things under the Sun, or over all the face of the earth: He was *King in* Jerusalem, *and he gave his heart to seek and search out by wisdom* (*i. e.* carnal or earthly wisdom) *concerning all things that are done under the heavens*; *i. e.* to find out happiness; but he found this *to be sore travel*: He tried all Creatures for satisfaction, but found it not; every Creature said, It is not in me. In all his fulness his heart was empty; he met a mighty famine over all the world. None in all the world like him for parts and knowledge; he was the wonder of the world for these: They came from all parts of the earth, even from all Kings of the earth, to hear of his wisdom. *Aristotle*, who by many is called *Natures Secretary*, was but a Novice to *Solomon*. 1 Kings 11. 4. Gen.41.5,6. Eccles.1.12. Job 28. 14. 1 Kings 4. 34.

And beſide his high and extraordinary parts, his
2 Chro. 9. 27. riches were ſo vaſt, as that *ſilver was plentiful as ſtones in Jeruſalem.* And he had ſumptuous buildings, *Eccleſ.* 2. and he kept a ſumptuous Court, 1 *Kings* 4. His Dominions were large and extenſive; and his Kingdom exceeding great: And he gave his
Eccleſ. 2. 1. heart to mirth and pleaſure; and whatſoever his eyes deſired, he kept not from them; *I withheld not my heart from any joy*, *v.* 10. And yet this was the *ſumma totalis*, the ſum of all, *v.* 11. *Behold, all is vanity and vexation of ſpirit.*

Wherever *Solomon* looked for ſatisfaction and happineſs out of God, he was failed in his expectation. As when *Eve* brought forth *Cain*, ſhe thought ſhe had born the promiſed Seed, *Gen.* 3. but ſhe found herſelf utterly miſtaken; and therefore names her next Son *Abel*, *i.e.* vanity. But *Solomon* doubles it, after his enquiry for content in all things under
Eccleſ. 1. 2. the Sun; *Vanity of vanities*, ſaith the Preacher, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*

And herein God was merciful to *Solomon*, in that he would let him find no reſt to his Soul out of God; as God ſaid to *Iſrael* when their hearts went a whoring from him; *Thou ſhalt find no eaſe, neither ſhall*
Deut. 28. 65. *the ſole of thy foot find reſt amongſt thoſe Nations where the Lord ſhall ſcatter thee.*

If a wounded man find a weed in the field that will give him eaſe, he'l not go to the Chirurgion: And ſo if a natural man's heart can find ſatisfaction in any thing of this world, he will not go to God. Whilſt the Prodigal could make any ſhift, he had no thoughts on his Fathers houſe.

L. Now

1. Now the Lord disables the whole Creation from giving satisfaction to men, sometimes by removing them from their place. As he made the Sun go back ten degrees by the shadow on *Ahaz* his Dial: So does he by mens Creature enjoyments on which their hearts are set; *Lovers and friends hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.* God often cuts down the Tree, under whose shade a man reckons upon it to find refreshing. This was *Job*'s case, *Job* 19. from the thirteenth Verse to the twentieth; *He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.* —— *My breath is strange to my wife.* —— And it was *David*'s case at *Ziklag*; his followers, who had stood by him in that distress, *talked of stoning him.*

Isa. 38.8. Psal. 18. Lam. 4.20. 1 Sam. 30.6.

2. Sometimes, though the Lord lets a man's Creature comforts remain with him, yet he locks up their vertue; so that though he have their presence, yet he hath not their influence; as he shut the heavens in *Elias* his time, that it rained not for the space of three years and six months. As the Lord doth sometimes shut up the nocent and destructive power of the Creature from his servants; as he did that of the fire from the three young men, and of the Lions from *Daniel*, and of the Viper from *Paul*: So he often shuts up the cheering and gladding power of the Creatures from men that have them in abundance. *Manna* may seem but light and loathsome meat to *Israel.*

James 5.17. Dan. 3. Dan 6. Acts 28.

3. God doth often disable the faculties in men for taking any comfort in whatsoever they possess. Man's faculties are frequently vitiated, like the mouth and palate in a Fever, that cannot relish the best

best drink. The light of the Sun hurts a weak eye. *Hagar* saw not the Well of water when her Son was ready to die for thirst, till *God opened her eyes*. And the Preacher speaks his own experience in this case; *There is an evil which I have seen under the Sun, and it is common among men: A man to whom God hath given riches and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof.* What's the most pleasant Instrument, where there is not Art to use it? No man hath the Key of the Creatures influence, that opens and shuts at pleasure, but God himself.

Gen.21.19.

Eccles.6.1,2.

Application.

1: This Doctrine serves for Caution to all: Take heed you leave not your Father's house, to go into this far Countrey: if you do, you are sure to meet with a mighty famine; you'l find you feed on Ashes. God will let a man find no content in any thing, that finds it not in him, or seeks it not there. God hath made the whole Creation too narrow for the soul of man, much more for the hearts of Saints. If your heart settle and fix on any Creature, you will find it will pinch you, as a narrow shoe doth the foot.

Isa.44.20.

The soul of man is from God; *God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul.* And so the soul that came from God, is for God, and not for another. God is for the soul, and the soul for God. *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.* And saith the Lord, *My son, give me thy heart.* Man was

Gen.2.7.

Eccles.12.7.

Hos.3.3.

Lam.3.24.

Prov.23.26.

was made in the image of God, that nothing but God ſhould ſatisfie man. God was ſatisfied with himſelf, when there was nothing elſe beſides himſelf; and man ſhould be ſatisfied with God alone; *I am God Alſufficient.*

It's ſaid God reſted not till he had made man; nor ſhould man reſt till he enjoy God; nay, man cannot. A man may ſay, as he did *Luke* 12. *Soul, take thine eaſe, thou haſt much goods laid up for many years:* I, but God will call him *fool* for it.

When *David* had a Kingdom, or a promiſe of it, this would not ſatisfie him without God. *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God.* It is God alone that can give a man his hearts deſire: *Delight thy ſelf in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee thy hearts deſire. O Iſrael, open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. Behold, my ſervants ſhall eat; but ye ſhall be hungry.* This is the difference betwixt thoſe that enjoy God, and other men. Pſal. 42. 1. Pſal. 37. 4. Pſal. 81. 10. Iſa. 65. 13.

Nature in man muſt have bread, but grace in man muſt have God. Give a gracious ſoul all the world, and take away God, and you give him *ſtones for bread.* He ſays as *Micha*, *Judges* 18. 24. *Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? In thee are all my ſprings*, ſaith the holy Pſalmiſt. A godly man can no more live without God, as many do, *Eph.* 2. 12. than a fiſh can live out of the water. Pſal. 87. ult.

Queſt.

Queſt. But hath not godlineſs *the promiſe of the life that now is?* 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. And he tells the
1 Cor. 3.21— Saints, *that all things are theirs*; even *the world*, and *things preſent*——

Anſw. 1; but not to ſet their hearts on. Theſe
Prov.23.26. things muſt keep in the Suburbs of your heart, but
Eph.3.16. not come into them. The heart is God's place, and Chriſt's place. Saints may uſe this world, but not
1.Cor.7.31. abuſe it; which they do, when they ſet their hearts on it. You may deſire the things of this world, but not luſt after them, as *Iſrael* did after fleſh. Your luſtings after them will make you *lean or thin from*
2 Sam.13.4. *day to day*, as *Amnon*'s luſting after *Tamar* did; and make you ſurfeit of them when you have them, as
Num.6.11. the people did of their fleſh.

While the humours of the body keep within their meaſure, the body hath an encreaſe or good temperament; but if they get into the exceſs, ſome ſickneſs commonly follows: So is it with the ſoul, while affections keep their ſtint to theſe outward things, what you have you'l enjoy comfortably;
Prov.10.22. *God adds no ſorrow with them; but gives you pow-*
Eccleſ.2.24. *er to eat---and to ſee good in your labour* and portion here. And as you'l have comfort in what you have; ſo what you have not, you will feel no need of it.

But if affections run out, and exceed their bounds, inſtead of ſatisfaction, and enough, you'l find a famine and dearth in your ſelves. And therefore when your hearts are ſettling here,
Mich.2.10. ſay to them, *Ariſe, this is not your reſt.* When men ſeek for reſt in a Countrey far from God, they will be like the unclean ſpirit, *which*
Matth.12.43. *walketh through dry places, ſeeking reſt, and findeth none.*

Queſt.

Queſt. But are godly perſons in danger of this, to let their minds go aſtray to theſe outward things?

Anſw. Yes; they may enter into this temptation. Chriſt's Diſciples hanker'd after great things in this world; their thoughts were buſied about an earthly Kingdom, both before Chriſt's death, and after his reſurrection. *James* and *John* made their requeſts for the greateſt places there, even when he had been telling them of his ſufferings at hand. And after his Reſurrection, all his Diſciples jointly asked the queſtion, *Lord, wilt thou at this time reſtore the Kingdom to* Iſrael. Mark 10.33, 35 — Acts 1.6.

The world may ſteal away a godly man's heart from God; as *Abſolom* did the peoples from *David*. When *Dinah* went to ſee the daughters of the Land, ſhe was defiled by *Shechem*: and ſo if Chriſtians do not over-ſee their hearts, they will *be gadding to change their way*, like the Jews; and now it's ten to one the world defiles and deflowrs their hearts. Our bleſſed Saviour ſaw it needful to Caution his Diſciples *to take heed leſt their hearts be overcharged with the cares of this world.* They had in them that μυστηριον, that common poyſon of nature, which, when abetted by Satan's temptations, may draw our hearts, as well as theirs, to court the world and the luſts of it; *The luſts of the fleſh, the luſts of the eye, and the pride of life.* 2 Sam. 15. Gen. 34. Jer. 2.36. Luke 21.34. 1 John 2.16.

Now

Gen. 9. Gen. 19. We know how righteous *Noah* was thus overtaken after the flood; and *Lot*, when out of *Sodom*. And it was after he had spoken of these days of *Noah*, that Christ gave that Caution to his Disciples. So much for this Doctrine from the fourteenth Verse, *viz. That when mens hearts go a whoring from God to the world, and the lusts of it, they meet with a famine or emptiness therein.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

Sheweth, That troubles of Conſcience are God's preparative to a Sinner's Converſion: And the Reaſons hereof. How God ſometimes varies his Method: And to what end. What degree of ſorrow requiſite: With the Application of the whole; from the laſt Clauſe of the fourteenth Verſe,

And he began to be in want.

I HAVE done with the two former Doctrines from the fourteenth Verſe. I come to the third from the laſt Clauſe, *viz.*

That God brings a ſinner into Soul or Conſcience ſtraits in order to his Converſion. Doct. 3.

The Prodigal's Caſe tells us this; *There aroſe a mighty famine in that Land*, that far Countrey, *and he began to be in want.* This fell out before his

return to his Father. The spiritual meaning and signification whereof is, That troubles of Conscience or Soul straits, are God's preparative to a sinner's returning to him. They are the sick that need the Physician. There is indeed sorrow and trouble for sin after Conversion, which is called *godly sorrow*; and this sorrow for sin is grace, for it is sorrow for sin, as sin is an unkindness to God: But this I am not speaking to now. There is a sorrow for sin before Conversion, and in order to it, which is not grace, but a preparation to it.

Mark 3.

2 Cor. 7.

Indeed this sorrow for sin, and trouble of Conscience in the sinners apprehension of wrath, may be dangerous, and an hinderance to grace, if not rightly ballas'd; It may bring to despair, as it did *Cain*, and *Saul*, and *Judas*: But rightly improved, it is a happy preparative to a natural man's return to God, as we see in this Prodigal. I say it is a happy preparative: because, though this trouble of Conscience begin in self-love, which God doth allow a sinner; yet he knoweth it will end in love to Jesus Christ; as that womans, called ἁμαρτωλὸς, a noted sinner, when she knew that *much was forgiven her*, *she loved much*.

Luke 7.

This conviction of sin and pain of Conscience, through feeling or fear of Divine wrath, driveth a sinner to cast about for ease, and a better state than now he is in.

Quest. But how is a man prepared for Conversion by his sense of sin and misery?

Answ. 1. This removes the barrs to a man's Conversion; *scil.* his ignorance, wilfulness, security, pride, self-flattery and presumption: These vanish away, when the true sense of sin and misery come in-

to

to the Soul. When the Earthquake had set open the Prison doors, and put the Goaler into a trembling in his body and soul, he then cries out to those men he had used so severely, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* Acts 16.

But yet if Christ carry not on this work farther by giving in converting grace, it will be but a false Conception, or a miscarrying Womb. For the Law in its humbling and terrifying work gives not grace, but helps in fitting the heart to receive it. These sorrows of Conscience by the work of the Law level the hills and strong holds of pride and presumption that hinder grace. *John* must prepare the way of the Lord.

There are two things required in a sinners Conversion; the removal of impediments, and the influence of grace into the heart. The one is the work of the Law, *i. e.* conviction of sin and labourings in the Conscience; and the other is Christ and his Gospel. If a room have light, there must be openings of the shuts, and shining of light of the Sun. If the shuts be not withdrawn, the Sun cannot shine into the room, nor the light come in; and if the Sun be not up, there can come no light, though the shuts be open. So impediments to Conversion must be removed by conviction of sin, and then God shines into the heart with *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. 4. 6.

2. Sense of sin, and straits of Conscience for it, make the sinner feel a need of Christ, as the Disciples did when the winds and storms were ready to sink the Ship or Vessel; *Lord save us, we perish.* Matth. 8. 24. Thus when storms arise in the Conscience of a sinner, now if the work be not hindered, it comes to

Acts 2.37. Acts 16.30. this, *Men and brethren what shall we do?* and *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* And now Christ is likely to be received on his own terms, *i. e.* with his Yoke and Cross: For no sorrows or sufferings for Christ are so bitter, as sorrow and sufferings in Conscience for sin before a man come unto Christ.

Quest. But doth God need this preparation-work in the conversion of sinners? Can he not give grace without thus shattering the Consciences of poor sinners?

Answ. The Question is not so properly what God can do, as what he will do in the case. This hath been God's path that he hath usually trodden in the work of Conversion, in the Conversion of *adulti*, such as have the use of Reason. Christ Jesus gave Matth.3.9. not grace to stocks or stones (though God is able to raise up Children to *Abraham* of stones;) but Jesus gave grace to men and women prepared to it by the ministry of *John* the Baptist, who preached first Matth.3.2. Repentance for sin, and then Faith in Christ. He can, and doubtless doth give grace to Children, as Mark 10. to those he took up in his arms and blessed: But he gives grace in another way to such; the same grace, but in a different way.

And this also must be yielded, That every sinners Conscience is not wounded alike in order to Conversion. The Smith makes not every Nail with his great Hammer; nor doth God smite every man's Conscience with the like terrour of the Law, that he 2 Chro.33.12. brings to grace. *Manasseh* was *greatly humbled*; and who knoweth how greatly? But if the Lord deal more favourably with some others, why should any man complain that his bones are set with a little pain? The Physician knoweth best how to use his Patient.

Patient. God has pity on many a poor ſoul under the ſenſe of ſin, and drops of his wrath, leſt *Satan* ſhould get an advantage; which was the reaſon why St. *Paul* willed the *Corinthians* to carry it gently towards the repenting and grieving inceſtuous perſon. 2 Cor. 2. 8, 11

O then bleſs God, if in thy Converſion he hath abated thee any thing of thoſe terrible and moſt ſevere ſhakings of Conſcience, that ſome other ſinners have had in theirs.

It's true, that there are amazing Convulſions of Conſcience in ſome men, who never reach Converſion, or ſaving Humiliation for ſin; as in *Cain* and in *Ahab*: *Seeſt thou how Ahab humbleth himſelf?* So in *Judas*, *Matth.* 27. Gen. 4. 13. 1 Kings 21.

And there is in ſome a ſilent ſorrowing for ſin, which though it make no great nóiſe in the Conſcience, yet it kindly melts the heart, and makes a man lothe both his ſins and himſelf, and fall into dear love with his Saviour. This was the Caſe of that woman in *Luke* 7. And for ought we read, moſt that the Lord Jeſus himſelf called, he called in this way. He converted many Publicans and Sinners with a ſtill voice: *The bruiſed reed he did not break, nor quench the ſmoaking flax.* He opened many ſinners hearts without any terrifying alarms of Conſcience, as he did *Lydia's*. Mark 12. 20. Acts 16. 14.

God can humble a ſinner as well by the ſenſe of mercy and free grace, as by the ſenſe of his wrath. This is certain, that the Lord doth change his way in the Converſion of ſinners: He hath, as St. *Jude* ſaith, *compaſſion on ſome, putting a difference; and others he pulls out of the fire.* A yielding block needs not ſo great and hard a wedge, as a hard knotty piece of wood doth. Jude 22, 23.

And

And God lets some endure the greater pangs and throws in their Conversion, that they may be the better Midwives to those that may need them in the like condition. God useth the same matter and method in every sinner's Conversion; first conviction of sin, and then conviction of righteousnes——— yet he uses not the same degrees: Some men have the sight of sin and of Christ almost together.

Quest. But what is the measure or required degree of humiliation or trouble of Conscience for sin in order to conversion?

Answ. When there hath been so much as brings the sinner out of himself, and off from all other Sanctuaries to Jesus Christ; and so to Christ, as that his mind would know him as the Gospel holds him forth to sinners; and the will would choose him, and the affections incline to embrace him, and upon his own terms; then there hath been sufficient trouble of Conscience for sin in order to a sinner's Conversion. This was *Mary Magdalens* Case in *Luke* 7. for she is probably thought to be that woman, a noted sinner.

The end of the terrour of the Law is to bring men to Christ, *Gal.* 3. 24. Indeed if trouble of Conscience drive sinners to Christ, only to prevent and save from damnation, this is not enough: For a throughly humbled sinner would have Christ, to escape the dominion, as well as the damnation of sin. He doth not divide Christ, but takes him in the whole; with his Scepter to rule in and over him and his sins, as well as with his Censer to offer Sacrifice for them. Sufficient sorrow for sin takes a man not only off of his shifts, but off of his lusts also. Mark 11. 28. He is weary of sin as well as sorrow. Christ sanctifying

fying is welcome to him, as well as Christ saving; and Christ purging, as well as Christ pardoning. A sinner is not sufficiently terrified with sin and wrath, till he come to say to Jesus Christ, as *Saul* did at his Conversion, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* [Acts 9. 6.]

Application.

1. Let every man see to it, that his sorrow for sin have been sufficient; that it hath shew'd him his lost condition; turned him from all refuges but Jesus Christ; made him willing to give as well as to take; willing that he be Christs, as Christ his. Sorrow for sin that hath not these effects, is not sufficient.

Many sinners look on sin through false Glasses: as 1. They measure sin by their own phansies, and so look upon it as a dead Serpent without a sting, or as a painted Lion, and so without fear of danger. Few men see sin with God's curse as it's sting; *The strength of sin is the Law.* How? As it curses the sinner; as it is Mount *Ebal* to the sinner. [1 Cor. 15. 56.]

2. Men commonly judge of sin by God's patience towards sinners, and not by God's word. Because God lets sinners alone at present, and holds his peace; and *because sentence is not speedily executed against an evil work; therefore the heart of man is fully set in them to do evil.* [Psal. 50. 21. Eccles. 8. 11.]

But

But what ſaith God, to undeceive ſuch men, in the quoted *Pſalm*? *Theſe things haſt thou done, and I kept ſilence; and thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch an one as thy ſelf: but I will reprove thee, and ſet thy ſins in order before thee.*

Rom. 2. 4, 5. God's patience ſhould greaten ſin in our eyes, and not leſſen it; becauſe ſin multiplies under patience. Though God have long patience, yet there will be a day of reckoning betwixt him and the ſinner: *His tranſgreſſion is ſealed up in a bag; and God ſews up*

Job 14. 17. *his iniquity*; as *Job*'s expreſſions are. Yea, God himſelf ſaith as much *Deut.* 32. 34. *Is not this laid up in ſtore with me, and ſealed up among my treaſure?* O then let men judge of ſin, not by God's patience, but by his Law. Look on every ſin as a debt in God's Book, that muſt be anſwered for.

Matth. 6. 12. Chriſt would have us ſo to eſtimate ſin, ſo that all our ſins muſt be anſwered for, as having brought us into debt to Gods Law and Juſtice; and we, or Chriſt for us, muſt pay the debt: We cannot; and Chriſt will not pay any ſinners debt, that knows not his debt and his own inability to ſatisfie it. Chriſt ſhed not his blood for preſuming ſinners. There

Numb. 15. 30. was *no Sacrifice* allowed in the Law *for ſins of preſumption.*

Therefore it's the ſafeſt way for ſinners to be *Nathans* to themſelves, to diſcover their own ſins to their ſouls, to load their prayers with confeſſions of them, and to give full audience to the Lectures of Conſcience that will ſpeak home to the ſinner firſt or laſt. Sin lies at the door, ready to go into

Gen. 4. 7. the Conſcience when God ſaith *Go.*

The

The Hebrews put ſin for its puniſhment, as *Gen.* 19. 15. *Take thy wife and thy daughters*, ſaith the Angel to *Lot*, *leſt thou be conſumed in the iniquity of the City*, *i.e.* the puniſhment of it. Every man's ſin will find him out, if he find not out it. *Be ſure your ſin ſhall find you out*, *Numb.* 32. 23. *i.e.* to confeſs it, and be humbled for it.

Jeſus Chriſt eſcaped not the puniſhment of ſin, when he undertook for their ſins who came to him; and therefore let not any ſinner think to eſcape the puniſhment of ſin in his Conſcience, who cometh not to Chriſt.

O ſpare not thine own ſoul in ſorrow for ſin, ſo far as thou findeſt it thy way to Chriſt. If remorſe of Conſcience for ſin be not come, it will come: And the ſinner may look upon himſelf within Gunſhot, that is at eaſe, and in peace at preſent.

Think not that God hath forgotten thoſe ſins that thou thy ſelf haſt. Thou ſinnedſt ſo and ſo, and *thoughteſt I was like thy ſelf*; *but I will ſet thy ſins in order before thee.* A man may be queſtioned by men for a murder done long ſince; how much more will a ſinner be queſtioned for his ſins, he ſinned in *Adam*, ſo many thouſand years ago; and eſpecially for thoſe of his whole life, if he have not ſued out his pardon by Chriſt? *Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedſt God in the wilderneſs, from the day that thou didſt depart from Ægypt.* This was forty years ſince, yet *Iſrael* muſt remember this, and be humbled for it, or elſe there is no pardon for it. Men that live in ſin, with eaſie thoughts of pardon, it's juſt with God to give them up to deſpair of pardon, when their Conſcience comes to ſenſe of their ſins. Pſal. 50. 21. Deut. 9. 7.

But yet take heed, when ſenſe of ſin and wrath does come, of ſettling your ſelves in the *valley of* Hoſ.2.15. *Achor*; but ſee it to be *a door of hope*. God diſlikes diſpair in ſinners, as much as preſumption. God would have ſinners magnifie his mercy, as well as his juſtice: He is Almighty to pardon, as well as to revenge. Your ſins may be mighty, but not Almighty: Numb. 14.17. But God is Almighty to pardon; *Let the power of my Lord be great*, ſaith *Moſes*, *to pardon this peoples ſin.* And the humbled ſinner hath this great power of God to pardon ſin in promiſe; *Let the* Iſa.55.7. *wicked forſake his way, and he will abundantly pardon*: and may glory in it, as they did *Mich.*7.18. *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and paſſeth by the tranſgreſſions of the remnant of his heritage; becauſe he delighteth in mercy?* And ſo much for the third and laſt Doctrine from the fourteenth Verſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

Repreſenteth, How much it is in the nature of man, when convicted of ſin, to have recourſe to any thing, though never ſo vain, for eaſe, rather than unto God. Several Reaſons or Cauſes from whence this comes to paſs. The Application informing us, That Conviction is but a partial Converſion; and of what nature are all falſe Refuges. With divers Conſiderations moving us to beware of them; from the firſt Clauſe of the fifteenth Verſe,

And he went and joyned himſelf to a Citizen of that Countrey.

HAVING Conſidered the ſinners miſery, let us next ſee the courſe he takes for his relief,

in the fifteenth Verse; *And he went and joyned himself to a Citizen of that Countrey, and he sent him into his fields to feed Swine.*

And here we have two things to be considered: 1. The project of this Prodigal for his relief in his great strait, *He went and joyned himself to a Citizen of that Countrey.* The Greek word signifieth to glue together; so that he did, as it were, put himself as an Apprentice to him; the same word as is used to express our union with Christ. *He that is joyned to the Lord, is one spirit.*

1 Cor. 6. 17. κολλώμενος in the Text ἐκολλήθη.

2. There is the imployment the Citizen set him to, *He sent him into his fields to feed Swine*: mean and base service.

As to the first, you'l say, Who is meant by this Citizen?

Stella in Luc. James 3. 15. It may be the Devil, or carnal Reason, which is from the Devil. So St. *James* speaks of *wisdom that is sensual and devilish.* The Devil is called *the Prince of this world*, and *the God of this world.* He is the Chief of this far Countrey; and to his service carnal and wicked men devote themselves: *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and his lusts ye will do.* The Devil hath wicked men at his beck; *They are taken captive by him at his will.*

John 4. 30. 2 Cor. 4. 4. John 8. 44. 2 Tim. 2. 26.

Rom. 8. 7. 2. The carnal mind, which is *enmity against God*, *sensual wisdom*, which is of the Devil, *James* 3. 15. This sent him not home to make his peace with his Father, but kept him in this far Countrey, though labouring under Famine. As *Israel* had rather return to *Egypt*, that had been to them a house of Bondage, than go forward to *Canaan*, the good Land of Promise.

Numb. 14. 4.

2. As

2. As to his imployment this Citizen ſet him about, it was baſe, *He ſent him into his fields to feed Swine*; which was intolerable to a Jew, to whom Swine were an abomination. Lev. 11. 7. It imports the drudgery that Satan puts natural men upon; they are his Vaſſals; he imployes them in very baſe work, to do his luſts. 2 Tim. 2. 26. As Turks do Chriſtians who are their ſlaves, but with this difference; theſe are drudges againſt their will, thoſe very willingly, *though they think not ſo*; as it's ſaid in another caſe of the *Aſſyrians*. Iſa. 10. 7.

The ſcope and ſpiritual meaning of this part of the Parable is this; It ſets forth 1. the ſorry ſhifts that men under Conviction and pangs of Conſcience, as to their ſinful ſtate, do commonly make to get any peace, and prevent their returning to God; any quiet from a brawling Conſcience keeps them off from ſeeking peace with God. So that this is the firſt Doctrine,

That when natural men come under troubleſome Convictions of ſin, and ſenſe of wrath, their way is to fly to any vain and ſorry ſhifts for eaſe, and not to God. Doctr.

It's the uſe of ſuch to make lies their refuge: It runs in the heart-veins of natural men: *We have made lies our refuge; and under falſhood have we hid our ſelves.* Iſa. 28. 15. Like a man that is fallen into the water, he'l catch at any thing that is next to help him, though it do him no good.

If

If a meer Moraliſt fall under theſe Convictions at any time, his ſanctuary is, *All theſe have I kept from my youth.* If a Phariſee's Conſcience check him, as it ſeldome does, his refuge is, *I thank God I am not as other men, or as this Publican.* If an ignorant Creature's conſcience grumble, he betakes himſelf to his good meanings, as the *Philiſtines* did, when they ſent away the Ark that plagued them upon a new Cart. If the Conſcience of a prophane man flie in his face, he flies to hereafter Repentance; or God is merciful; or Jeſus Chriſt died for ſinners in the lump. And thus natural men, when againſt their will they are convinced of their woful condition, think thus to skin over the ſore for preſent.

Matth. 19.

Luke 18.

1 Sam. 6.

And this is the reaſon why we have many convinced ſinners, but few converted, becauſe their convictions ſend them to falſe refuges, and not to God. This Prodigal, when he was in want, and met with a mighty famine in a far Countrey, he ſpeaks not a word as yet of his returning home to his Father; but he hires himſelf to a Citizen of that far Countrey. So long as a ſinner can make any ſhift to be quiet in his ſinful ſtate, he thinks not of his return to God. As it's ſaid of *Ephraim, when he ſaw his ſickneſs, he went to the Aſſyrian,* not to God, though he miſſed there of healing for his wound.

Hoſ. 5. 13.

We have much experience how apt men are to ward off the blows of the Word from their Conſciences: And if a blow do light there, and hurt, their plaiſter is ſome worldly diverſion; ſome deceitful luſt in their heart asks them, as *Jonadab* did *Amnon, Why art thou ſo lean from day to day?* or they think to wear it out in time, as ſome hardy men do by bodily diſtempers.

2 Sam. 13. 4.

It's

It's the practice of men in their ſins to keep off their doom, as long as they can, by Apologies for themſelves, having been taught it from the beginning; *The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. The woman which thou gaveſt me, gave me, and I did eat.* When *John* terrified the Phariſees and Sadducees with, *O generation of Vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* They immediately flie to their imaginary City of Refuge; *We have* Abraham *to our Father.* Gen. 3. Matth. 3.

What a Catalogue of Pleas had *Paul* for himſelf before his Converſion? He had his birth, and his ſect, and his unblamable life, and his zeal in his way: but when he had obtained mercy and grace to be a Convert, he was aſhamed of all thoſe plauſible ſhifts he had made to keep and nuſſle himſelf in his natural, ſinful eſtate; he caſt them all off as droſs and dung, when he came to know the neceſſity and excellency of Jeſus Chriſt by experience; here he ſaw was a convicted ſinners City of Refuge indeed. Phil. 3. 4, 5, 6. Phil. 3. 7, 8, 7.

Poor ſinners have their buſhes to ſtand under when a ſhour comes, till there come a ſtorm indeed, that forceth them out to ſeek a ſafer place. When a ſinner is ready to fall, then Satan puts a Reed in the ſhape of a Staff into his hand; he repreſents to him an imaginary mercy of God, ſuch as cannot be found in the holy Scripture; ſuch a mercy as would deſtroy God's Juſtice, and Truth, and Holineſs; ſuch mercy as incourageth in ſin, *to ſin that grace may abound.* And if he be beaten off from this mercy, then he catches at hereafter Repentance, or at ſome negative goodneſs: He thinks in himſelf, he is not guilty of ſuch and ſuch ſins as Rom. 6. 1.

many

many are, and ſome of the godly in Scripture. I am the fuller in this caſe, becauſe men are ſo full of ſhifts, when under convictions of ſin, to hold them off from through Converſion to God.

Reaſons of the Doctrine.

The Reaſons why men, when under Convictions of Conſcience have recourſe to falſe Refuges, are

1. From their ignorance: when they feel their wound, they are ignorant of a certain remedy, and therefore make many experiments: They are as men affrighted out of their ſleep, that know not on the ſudden where they are, or what to do. Mens Ignorance of the Covenant of Works, and Grace, and of the ſtate of nature and grace; or of the nature of ſin and grace; this ignorance makes them ſo fouly miſtake in their Sanctuaries, when their ſin finds them out, and the curſe of the Law purſues their ſouls: *My people are deſtroyed for lack of knowledge.* A blind man could not hit the way to any of the Cities of Refuge among the Jews: So poor ignorant ſouls, when they fall under terrour of Conſcience, through their blindneſs they cannot hit their way to Chriſt, the appointed remedy. Satan drives on a great deſign in blinding the minds of them that believe not, leſt they ſhould believe, and be healed: As the *Philiſtines* carried on their deſign to deſtroy *Sampſon* by putting out his eyes.

Hoſ. 4. 6.

2 Cor. 4. 4.

2. A

2. A second Reason is mens unwillingness to venture on Christ upon Scripture terms: Sinners would have Christ, but on their own terms; his are too high for them; to forsake all, even their sweetest lusts, take up his Cross and follow him, not knowing whether they go, as *Abraham* did his own Kindred and Country; therefore they take up with cheaper stuff. Others, besides that rich man, think Christ's terms too hard. Jesus Christ is a City of Refuge to none that would have him and thir lusts too: Indeed they may bring their sins to him, when they come themselves, but as their sores, of which they would be healed. But it's as hard for a natural man to leave his lusts, to follow Christ, as it was for that rich man to leave his great estate. Matth. 10. 37, 38 —— Luke 14. 26. Gen. 12. 11. Heb. 8. Matth. 19. 21.

But doth not God offer Christ, and Christ himself freely, and without terms? —— *buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* Yes; but this invitation is to such as thirst; *Ho every one that thirsteth come*—— And this thirst of the sinner comes through the Consciences labouring under the burden of sin, and sense of Divine wrath: *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Isa. 55. 1. Matth. 11. 28.

And yet Christ's terms, he propounds to a sinner, hinder not the terms of the gift. It is but as if a man should bid you cast the stones out of your hand, that you may take an handful of silver or gold; for so the sinner is bid to cast his lusts out of his heart, that there may be room for Christ; *Cast away from you all your transgressions*—— Now rather than a natural man will do this, he will close with any sorry shift to get his Conscience quiet. Ezek. 18. 31.

3. A third Reason is, because it is ease, and not grace, or Christ himself, that the sinner troubled in Conscience first desires and seeks. The troubled sinner does not naturally look out after grace, but ease; the soul is as eager of ease as the body. When the body is in great pain, a Countrey man will take any slip-sawce, as they say, for some ease, rather than he will go to the Physician; this is costly; he is for any thing that will stupifie the part grieved, and minds not to take away the cause of the grief.

Thus doth the soul of a natural man, when he is in pain; there any thing that will give him present ease is welcome: He'l stop *Cerberus* his mouth with a Crust. *David* must play away *Saul* his Evil Spirit with his Harp. Yea, there is many a man, when in Soul-trouble for sin, and sense or fear of wrath, will fall to prayer and reading, and resolving, &c. to get some quiet within; but so soon as it is got, his Devotion is laid aside, as a man plucks off the plaister when he thinks the sore is well. When the Lord slew *Israel*, then they sought him, and *enquired early after God*; yet they did *but flatter him*; they turned back. A man in a storm will into his Neighbours house, not to dwell there, but for shelter, till the storm be over. So is it with natural men, when Conscience is affrighted, they are for good prayers, and good books, and good company; but when the pain is past, they are as they were afore.

Psal. 78.34,36, 41.

Application.

1. This informs us, that a ſinner, who is convinced of his ſinful and miſerable eſtate, is but half converted: Indeed this is but the leaſt part of his converſion; to drive him out of his ſecret places, to keep him off from falſe refuges and ſelf-ſhiftings, and to get him to Chriſt upon Chriſt's terms, and to ſtick there, is the better part of the work. To convince of ſin is the Spirit's firſt work; but to convince of righteouſneſs is the harder: What to keep him from falſe Sanctuaries on the one hand, and from deſpairing reaſonings on the other, this is the more difficult buſineſs. Either a man is ſullen, and will not hearken to a remedy for the wound, as *Cain* was; *Why is thy countenance fallen*? ſaith God to him: *If thou doeſt well ſhalt thou not be accepted*? or elſe he betakes himſelf to the next hedge he meets with for ſhelter, and there he thinks himſelf as ſafe as the *Jebuſites* in their ſtrong hold, when they ſent this meſſage to *David*; *Except ye take away the blind and the lame, ye ſhall not come in hither.* The ſtrong man in the ſinner, that is Satan, will not be diſarmed, till a ſtronger than himſelf do the work, that is, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. *Paul's* confidence in his ſtock, and ſect, and legal righteouſneſs, were a great prejudice to his converſion, ſo that he was converted in a miracle.

John 16.8,9.

Gen. 4.6,7.

2 Sam. 5.6.

Luk. 11.21,22.

Acts 9.

2. This may put us upon examination of our ſelves in the caſe; and *Uſe* 2.

1. Observe your aptness or averseness to apologize for sin, or for your selves in sin. Men hard to be convinced of sin, will easily take up with false Refuges when they are convinced: Most natural men withstand conviction as long as they can; *Are we also blind?* And when they are convinced, and come under the lash of Conscience, they will shark any where for present ease: as *Cain*, when he was driven out of the presence of the Lord, full of terrour in his Conscience for his sin, he strove to make diversions, in seeking a pleasant situation, and building a City for his safety, thinking (it may be) to drown the howlings of his Conscience; as the *Italians* of old were wont to do by Thunder, in ringing their great Bells, and shooting off their great Canon.

John 9.

Gen 4.

2. Observe whether the Sanctuary you haste to upon conviction of sin, be a Scripture Refuge, or some forged apprehension of your own phansie. It is the Word rightly understood, and so applied, that is an easing plaister for a disturbed Conscience at sin. What saith the Scripture? It is the word of Christ that cures the sores of Conscience: *Son, be of good chear, thy sins are forgiven thee.* It's the office of the Word to wound, and search the sinners Conscience, *Heb.* 4. 12. How did the Word make *Felix tremble*? God smites the Earth with the *rod* of his mouth; *I have hewed them by the Prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth.*

Rom. 4. 3.

Matth. 9. 2.

Acts 24. 25.

Isa. 11. 4.

Hos. 6. 5.

And it is also the office of the Word to heal a wounded Spirit; *The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary.* And, *The Lord hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the Captives.* O when convinced and grieved sinners put their

Isa. 50. 4.

Luke 4. 18.

their own wits to it for eaſe, it's a poor Medicine! *Medicina eſt morbo imbecillior*; the Potion is too weak for the Diſeaſe. A ſinner muſt follow the Word for his guide in all Soul-ſtraits, as the *Iſraelites* did the Cloud in the Wilderneſs; and look up to Jeſus Chriſt for healing their ſtung Conſciences, as they did to the brazen Serpent for their ſtung Bodies. John 3.14,15.

3. If the Sanctuary that a troubled Conſcience takes to, leave or keep him in his ſinful ſtate, and loath to come out of it, as *Lot*'s wife out of *Sodom*, this man makes lies his Refuge; he believes a lie; a judgment on the followers of the man of ſin. The true Sanctuary of a grieved ſinner is the free and rich grace of God in the Goſpel, which is a great enemy to ſin, *Tit.* 2. 11. yea, though a man be willing to part with ſome particular ſins; if he be not willing to part with his ſinful ſtate, he leans but on a broken Reed if he charm his troubled mind with this. 2 Theſſ. 2. 11.

4. If a ſinners Refuge in trouble of Conſcience be injurious to the Attributes of God, his Mercy, his Juſtice, his Holineſs, &c. this man deceives himſelf. How many, how many Conſcience-galled ſinners lick themſelves whole with an imaginary mercy and grace in God? ſuch a mercy as God hath not declared in his Word?

David ſuppoſeth in that prayer of his, *Pſal.* 49.5. that there are ſinners to whom God will not be merciful. There was no Sacrifice in the Law for *preſumptuous ſinners*. As the Jews phanſie to themſelves a ſtrange Meſſias, which the Scripture knows not: ſo do many ſinners, yea convinced ſinners, phanſie to themſelves a ſtrange mercy in God; ſuch Numb. 15. 30.

a

a mercy as is injurious to his justice and holiness; such mercy as separates between the pardoning and purging of the sinner; whereas it's plain in the Word of Truth, that sin is nauseous, when the sinner obtaineth mercy and grace: grace and sin are greater contraries than fire and water; because the Divine Nature is infinitely opposite to natural corruption. It is infinitely so in God, and everlastingly so in his Saints.

3. This Doctrine is useful to exhortation to all that have, or may have trouble of Conscience for sin. Take heed of false Sanctuaries, they will fail you at last, as *Achitophel* did *David*, who seemed to be his bosome friend. Psalm.

It's not enough for you to know your lost condition, but you must seek the way to be found, as this Prodigal at length did: You must know your Cure, as well as your Disease. And your only cure is Jesus Christ. The brazen Serpent in *Numb.* 21. was a famous Type of this. *John* 3. 14, 15. Let the sense of sin, and sorrow for it, send you to Christ; and you wrong him much, if you say or think he cannot, or will not help you.

John 6.37. *He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* You'l find all other things Physicians of no value: Job. and as *Job* said of his friends, *miserable comforters.* O then come to Christ, and stick not in the way, but Matth. 11. 28. come home to him, and he'l ease your Conscience of it's burden; come to Christ on his own terms, and you are made for ever.

Take heed of carnal reasonings, when you would have ease in your Consciences. As *John* said to the Matth. 3. Pharisees, *Think not to say in your selves we have Abraham to our Father*: So think not to say within your

your ſelves, God is merciful, and Chriſt died for ſinners, meerly to quiet Conſcience, that you may ſin with eaſe. This is the way of the wiſdome of the fleſh to befool you. The wiſdome of the fleſh bids you apply your own Plaiſters, and take your own Receipts, and not go to the Chirurgion or Phyſician, and ſo many convinced ſinners periſh in their carnal reaſonings about the way of peace; *The way of peace they have not known.* Rom. 3. 17.

Alas, what can imaginary ſhelters advantage you in real dangers? Will the ſhadow of a Houſe keep you from wett in a ſtorm? This is the caſe of many troubled ſinners. Be jealous of Sanctuaries. Better to endure your pain, than to accept of falſe eaſe: Though there be danger in deſpair, yet there is more in preſuming. That it may be hath *killed its thouſands*, but the other *its ten thouſands*; as the woman ſaid of *Saul* and *David*. 1 Sam.

To take you off from carnal reaſonings in this caſe; Conſider

1. That carnal reaſon is blind in the ways of God with loſt ſinners. This is ſeen in natural men of the greateſt parts and attainments, as in *Nicodemus* a Doctor in *Iſrael*; yet how ſimply did he reaſon and diſcourſe Jeſus Chriſt in the point of Regeneration? 1 Cor. 2. 14. John 3.

2. The wiſdom of the fleſh is deceitful as well as blind: It hath of the Serpent in it, which *beguiled Eve through his ſubtilty*. The wiſdome of the fleſh preſents ſpiritual and eternal things to a man as they are not indeed: It puts a fair gloſs of pleaſure and profit on ſin; but repreſents the ways of God unlively, as it did by Chriſt; *There is no comelineſs in him, why we ſhould deſire him.* It maſked the way 2 Cor. 11. 3. Iſa. 53.

to

to Heaven wider than the Scripture doth; and the way to Hell narrower; else how could any man say in his heart, *I shall have peace, though I walk in the imaginations of my own heart?*

Deut.29.19.

3. Carnal reason, or the wisdome of the flesh is enmity against God, and against his holy will: It maintains argument stiffly against many duties God requireth; and it vitiates the mind and judgment about spiritual things, as a foul stomack doth the palate.

Rom.8.7.

4. All carnal reasonings do but skin over the sores of Conscience, they will break out again: They may muzzle Conscience for a while; but it will awake, though at present it may be in a dead sleep, and like *Sampson*, will break all Cords and Wyths, and lay about it at the sinner, as *Sampson* did at the *Philistines*. O consider how the holy Scriptures speak enough, and enough again, against mens deluding confidences: *The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them. The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.* And, *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass your selves about with the sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled: This shall ye have at mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

Jer.2.ult.

Isa.28.17.

Isa.50.11.

All carnal reasonings about your estate towards God are but foundations of Sand, that a showr or storm will wash away; and like that building with untempered morter, which the Hail-stones did rend. God will at length so shake and shatter the Consciences of such sinners, that all their leaning-stocks for ease shall fall, and they with them.

Ezek.13.10, 11.

5. While a man is under the ſenſe of ſin and wrath, there is ſome hopes; there are ſome hopes of his converſion, for he is in God's way to it: But when he betakes himſelf to conſult with fleſh and blood, the caſe is more deſperate. It's a harder thing to overcome Souldiers in a Gariſon, than in the open Field; ſo is it harder to convert a ſinner to God, when he hath fortified himſelf with opinionative ſhifts and bullwarks, than when his conviction of ſin lays him open to the fear of God's wrath. The Phariſee's own righteouſneſs kept them from Jeſus Chriſt; ſo do a ſinners own carnal reaſonings.

6. It is Satan's way, when he ſees a ſinner wearied with Conſcience-conflicts, to allure him into his tents, as *Jael* did *Siſera*, and there ſooths him with carnal reaſonings for ſome eaſe and quiet, till the opportunity come, and then ſlays him. Judges 4.

Queſt. But what kind of reaſonings have men to get looſe from diſquieting Conſciences?

Anſw. Very many: I'le ſpeak of ſome.

1. The heart reaſons thus; There are thouſands, yea millions, that walk and live as I do. But to this men ſhould reply; *Follow not a multitude to do evil:* we know *the whole world lyeth in wickedneſs*, 1 *John* 5. 19. & *few there be who find the way to life.* Exod. 23. 2. Matth. 7. 14.

2. Some times men may reason thus; Very many of the great and learned men of the world, the Christian world, tread the pathes that I do, and if they be not saved, who can? As they
Matth. 19. 23, 24, 25. said, when Jesus said *a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of heaven, who then can be saved?* say his Disciples. This is like their reasoning in *John* 7. 58. *Have any of the Rulers of the Pharisees believed on him?* But to this reply that of the Apostle to the *Corinthi-*
1. Cor. 1. 26. *ans, Brethren, ye see your calling, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.*

3. Some argue thus in themselves; This is an easie way I am in; my Conscience would let me have no quiet before, and I see there is nothing but trouble and melancholy in a stricter and precisier course; Why should I travel forty years through a wearisome Wilderness to *Canaan*, as some do? I, but to this reply; This carnal ease and pleasure is the Devil's Paradise: And what comfort is it to the Bee to be drowned in honey? Remember Father *Abraham's*
Luke 16. 25. words to that *Dives, Remember, that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, but now thou art tormented.*

Heb. 11. O for *Moses* his faith, who chose rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to injoy the pleasures of sin for a season. And for *David's* mind, who *esteemed a day in Gods*
Psal. 84. *Courts better than a thousand elsewhere.*

In a word, when any of you come under rebukes and terrours of Conscience for sin, make use

uſe of the weapon that hath wounded, for healing, *i. e. the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God*; and then to Jeſus Chriſt, he is the only *City of Refuge* for a ſinner to fly to from the *Purſuer of blood.* So much for the firſt Doctrine from the firſt Clauſe of the fifteenth Verſe.

CHAP. XXI.

Sets forth the Power that Satan hath over men whilſt in their Natural Eſtate. Together with a threefold Uſe to be made hereof; from the ſame Clauſe of the fifteenth Verſe,

And he went and joyned himſelf to a Citizen of that Countrey.

John 14. 30. 2 Cor. 4. 4. WE Are to conſider this Citizen, as meaning Satan, who is the Prince and God of this World, which is this far Countrey; and who ſeeks to make a prey of men when under Conſcience-ſtraits for ſin. As 1 Cor. 4. 5. St. *Paul* knew he did by the inceſtuous perſon, 2 Cor. 2. 6, 11. who was, by his order, delivered over unto Satan. So that the ſecond Doctrine is,

Doct. 2. *That Satan hath great power over men, whilſt in their natural eſtate, both in their ſinning, and in their trouble of Conſcience for ſin after Conviction.*

Satan

Satan hath power over them, not only as he had with *Adam* in innocency to tempt him; and with the Son of God to tempt him, though he prevailed not as he did with *Adam*; and with Saints to tempt them, as he did *David*, 2 *Chron.* 21. but he hath power to *take them captive at his will*; to make them his Vassals. Matth. 4. 2 Tim. 2. ult.

Satan had power to *enter into Judas*, to influence him to the betraying of Jesus. Haply *Judas* might not intend the death of Christ, as the Jews did; but might conceive he would slip out of the midst of them, as he had often done, when they sought to lay hands on him. Satan might help him to this conceit, that Jesus would save himself, and he get money; which pleased his humour at present, but brought him at last into despair. Luke 22. 3. Luke 4. 29, 30. John 8. 59.

God delivers more over to Satan than the Church doth: He is *the Spirit that now worketh*, that worketh effectually *in the children of disobedience*. And therefore sinners in their conversion are said to be *turned from the power of Satan unto God*. ἐνεργοῦντος Eph. 2. 2. Acts 26. 18.

Quest. Whence hath Satan this power?

Answ. God lets it be so in his just judgment upon the fall of man. In the fall man forsook God, and cleav'd to the Devil: so that it was first their sin to put themselves into the power of Satan; and now it is God's judgment upon men. Those Scriptures may be read with trembling, as *Belshazzar* read the hand-writing on the wall, *Psalm* 78. 49. *The Lord cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending evil Angels among them.* And that Prophetical Prayer of *David* concerning *Judas*, *Let Satan stand at his right hand.* Dan. 5. Psal. 109. 6.

Quest.

Queſt. How doth Satan exerciſe this power?

1. In tempting men to as much ſin as he can, to ſuch ſins as himſelf cannot act. He tempts them to Atheiſm, though he himſelf cannot be one; the
James 2.19. Devils believe that there is a God, and tremble. He tempts them to Drunkenneſs and Adultery, ſins that he cannot properly act. He provoked our firſt
Gen.3. Parents to eat, but he himſelf could not eat. Yea, Satan hath influence on them in their beſt actions and works, in their callings, in their holy performan-
Zach.3.1. ces: *He ſtood at* Joſhua's *right hand to reſiſt him, when he ſtood before the Lord for the people.* But he hath power on carnal mens hearts, when they come before the Lord. He matters not how much of Religion they do, ſo he can poiſon their manner and ends. He may carry men to Church in a de-
Matth.4. ſign, as he did Jeſus to a Pinacle of the Temple.
Matt.7.22,23. The Devil had power over their ſouls, who had power to caſt him out of other mens bodies. Satan can tempt no Creature but man to ſin; and ſo he beſtirs himſelf among them.

2. He puts them on to preſume on the goodneſs of their preſent and final eſtate, however they live in this World. He teacheth them to ſay, *We ſhall*
Deut. 29.19. *have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our own hearts.* The unbelieving Jews could not be moved from their confidence, that they were *A-*
John 8. 44. *braham's Children*; though our bleſſed Saviour proved it to them, that they were *of their Father the Devil.* A lying Spirit deludes them, as he did *Zedekiah* that arch falſe Prophet, in making him confident that he had the Spirit of the Lord, and by that gave counſel to *Ahab*, 1 *Kings* 22.

3. In

3. In preſenting to their minds lying Refuges, when they are under painful convictions of Conſcience for ſin: Satan *transformeth himſelf into an Angel of light* to the ſinner: He can turn himſelf into any ſhape or appearance, as the Poets feign of *Proteus*. As Satan helps the man of ſin to *do lying wonders*, 2 *Theſ.* 2. 9. ſo he helps many troubled ſinners to lying Sanctuaries. It is likely he ſet *Cain* on building a City, to charm the evil Spirit that vexed him. 2 Cor. 11. 14. Proteus by the Paynims called the god of the Sea.

4. If this way fail, then he aggravates the ſinners trouble of Conſcience for ſin, to get him into deſpair: not that he affects mens being troubled for their ſins; but when they are ſorrowful this way, he would have them ſwallowed up of over-much ſorrow. This is one of Satan his devices to get an advantage of the ſinner, to bring about his damnation. 2 Cor. 2. 7, 11.

Satan makes many a ſoul pine away in their ſins, as thoſe Jews ſaid of themſelves, and perſwades them to *curſe God, and die*, as he would have done *Job*. And as he prompted his Friends to eſteem him a Hypocrite: ſo he prompts many a Conſcience-wounded-ſinner to look upon himſelf as a Reprobate, as having out-ſinned mercy, and he muſt be damned. Ezek. 33. 10. Job 2. 9.

Queſt. But how cometh it to paſs that natural men are no more ſenſible of this power of Satan over them?

Anſw. Becauſe he blinds their minds, as the *Philiſtines* put out *Sampſon*'s eyes, and did with him what they liſt: He deadens their ſenſe of feeling. The holy Apoſtle *Paul* ſpeaks of ſinners that are *paſt feeling*. Satan is a Juggler, and an Im- 2 Cor. 4. 4. Eph. 4. 19.

2 Cor. 11. 3. Impostor, or Deceiver, from the beginning.

Quest. Have natural men no power to resist the Devil?

Answ. They have lost it very much. *Adam* had
Matth. 4. power, if he had used it; and Jesus Christ had power, and did use it; and men in a state of grace
James 4. 7. have power to *resist the Devil*, and *to overcome*
1 John 2. 14. *the wicked One*, and *to keep themselves that the*
1 John 5. 18. *wicked One touch them not*, *i. e.* with a destructive touch; such a touch as he moved the Lord to touch *Job* with.

Satan indeed hath power to tempt the Saints, and in part to get advantage of them. He *provoked*
2 Chro. 21. 1. David *to number the people*, and he did it; and he
Luke 22. 31. *winnowed Peter*; and he assailed *Job* very hard;
Jo. ch. 1. & 2. and *he stood at* Joshua *the High Priests hand, to re-*
Zach. 3. 7. *sist him, when he stood before the Lord.* Our blessed Saviour hath taught us to pray daily, that
Matth. 6. 13. *we be not led into tempiation.* Yet Satan hath not that power over the Saints, as over other men; yea, as over man in the state of innocency, *i. e.* to seduce them from God, and from a state of grace. It's true, man in innocency in one respect had the advantage against Satan, which men in a state of grace have not now; in that he had no sin to joyn
John 14. 13. with Satan: In this point he might say, as our Lord Jesus did; *The Prince of this World cometh, and hath nothing in me.* Yet the Saints now have that power against and over Satan in other cases, that men in innocency had not; power to resist him,
Luke 22. 32. power to overcome him: Christ *prayeth for their*
Rom. 16. 20. *faith*; and they have a promise that *Satan shall be bruised under their feet.*

I,

1, but natural mens power to reſiſt the Devil is but ſmall; ſome they have, *i. e.* when he tempts to ſins againſt the light of nature, and a natural Conſcience, in theſe they may reſiſt temptation. There are many ſins that natural men ſin, which they falſly charge upon Satan, they would ſin if Satan were dead and buried; they are as willing to ſome ſins as the Devil would have them; as the Phariſees and Jewiſh Rulers were to be rid of Jeſus. Rom. 2. 14,15.

It's to be obſerved in Scripture, that the people of God charge not the Devil in the confeſſion of ſin, as *Eve* did with hers; *I have ſinned, and I have done fooliſhly*, ſaith *David*. He pleads not that Satan provoked him, as *Eve* did, that the Serpent gave her, and ſhe did eat. But many wicked men charge their ſins upon the Devil, when they tempt him to tempt them, as *Saul* ſought to the Devil. 2 Sam. 24. 17. 1 Sam. 28.

Application.

1. Let no man be too fearleſs of the Devil; he hath great power in the world, eſpecially over this men of this world; he is called *the god of this world*; he would be ſo, and the Lord lets him be ſo to ſome men, in ſome things. He is *the Prince of the power of the Air, that worketh in the children of diſobedience*. Yea, he may have power over the people of God, to tempt them, if *they watch and pray not againſt temptation*, to which the Lord Jeſus cautioned his Diſciples. 2 Cor. 4. 4. Eph. 2. 2. Matth. 26. 41.

He put on *Peter* to diſſwade Chriſt from his ſufferings, for which he had this check, *Get thee behind me Satan.* He winnowed all the Diſciples, and thereupon they all left him when apprehended. And *Paul* himſelf, after he had been in the third Heaven, was *buffeted by a meſſenger of Satan.* Yea, he was permitted to tempt our Lord Jeſus to a moſt horrid ſin; and to carry his body to a Pinacle of the Temple, and after into a high Mountain.

Matth. 16.

2 Cor. 12. 7.

Matth. 4. 4, 8.

Yea, and Satan may be in poſſeſſion of ſouls, and not be known; the Devil often works in men *incognito.* Of all Creatures he would poſſeſs men; and though he acted by the Serpent's head, yet his aim was at *Eve*, and *Adam*'s heart. He got leave to go into the Swine, yet his deſign was at their owners, to make them diſguſt Jeſus the more; and ſo they did, *They beſought him to depart out of their Coaſts.*

Gen. 3. 1.

Matth. 8. ult.

The Devil knows that men only, of all Creatures in this world, are capable of ſin and hell; and therefore he lays his contrivances againſt men, to bring as many as he can into his own Condemnation: And he had rather poſſeſs their ſouls than their bodies; he would have the beſt room in the houſe for himſelf, and that's the heart; He *entred into* Judas *his heart*, and *into* Ananias *his heart: Why hath Satan filled thy heart?* Yet Satan's ſpiritual poſſeſſions may be known, and how? why, when men will do the luſts of the Devil; *Ye delight to do his luſts.* The luſts of the fleſh in carnal men, are ſo many unclean ſpirits: Not that the Devil does all theſe works of the fleſh, but he tempts men to all. He did not dance about the golden Calf, but he made *Iſrael* to do ſo.

John 8. 44. θέλετε ποιεῖν. Gal. 5. 19.

Exod. 32.

Let

Let no man therefore be too fearleſs of Satan. *Paul* was jealous over the believing *Corinthians*, *Leſt as the Serpent beguiled* Eve, *their minds ſhould be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt.* 2 Cor. 11. 3.

2. Yet let not any ſinner, under the power of conviction of ſin, deſpair of Converſion, becauſe of the power that Satan improves to hinder it. For conſider, that the word of reconciliation which is preached to you, is the *power of God* to the ſalvation of the greateſt of ſinners. St. *Paul's* Miniſtery turned men *from the power of Satan unto God.* Therefore let ſuch wait on the Miniſtery of the Goſpel, and do it in hope, as the infirm people did for the Angels troubling of the waters of that healing Pool, *John* 5. Rom. 1. 16. 1 Cor. 1. Acts 26. 18.

And be adviſed alſo to be in the company of the godly; Satan hath not that power to vend his wares there, as among other Company. The Spirit of Divination knew this in that poſſeſſed Damoſel he made uſe of to diſturb *Paul* and his holy Company in their meeting to pray; their prayers, and *Paul's* authority from the Lord Jeſus, caſt him out. Acts 16. v. 18.

In thy trouble of Conſcience for ſin be not overmuch alone. In this caſe I may uſe the words of the Preacher, *Eccleſ.* 4. 10. *Wo to him that is alone.* Solitarineſs in this ſeaſon is Satan's houſe of temptation; he aſſaults where there is no help in reſiſting him, as he did by *Eve.* The evil Spirit uſed that man to ſolitarineſs *Luke* 8. 27. God is much for the ſociety of his people; he appears with his power and glory in the Aſſemblies of the Saints. Frequent ſolitarineſs is uſeful indeed for men of grace; Jeſus Chriſt went oft aſide into a ſolitary place: but poor ſouls afflicted in their ſpirits for ſin, ſhould be Mark 1. 35.

afraid of it, as Children are to be alone.

And be further adviſed to follow faithfully the affairs of your Calling: Idleneſs is the Devil's work-
Matth. 13. 25. ing time. While men ſlept, the Enemy came and ſowed his tares. When *David* was lazing and ga-
2 Sam. 11. zing on his Houſe-top, the Devil preſented an Object to ſtir up his luſt.

Eph. 4. 26, 27. Again, take heed of an angry paſſionate ſpirit; this gives place to the Devil: And take heed of an envious ſpirit; Satan is the envious one; he filled *Cain* with envy at his brothers good works, becauſe his own were evil: And beware of a diſcontented ſpirit; this was one of the Devil's firſt ſins, and the ſin of our firſt parents: And above all, ſeek to Jeſus Chriſt for deliverance from Satan's bondage. *If the*
John 8. 36. *Son make you free, ye are free indeed. He was a-*
Luke 4. 18. *nointed to preach deliverance to the captives. He*
Luke 13. 16. *looſed the daughter of* Abraham, *whom Satan had bound eighteen years*; and it is obſervable how affectionately Jeſus both ſpake and did in her caſe.

3. Here is comfort to God's people, that Satan's power is exceedingly broken as to them; he hath no
Eph. 6. 12. to intereſt in them, and they have armour of proof,
the 18th. both defenſive and offenſive againſt him. You have
John 14. 17. the Spirit in you to guide and aſſiſt you; and *he that*
1 John 4. 4. *is in you, is greater than he that is in the world*: And
Heb. 1. ult. you have the Miniſtery of the holy Angels, who are ſtronger than Devils: And you have the continual prayers of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt for you, that your faith fail not: And you have a promiſe, that *God will*
Rom. 16. 20. *bruiſe Satan under your feet ſhortly*; and that *the*
Matth. 16. *gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt you.*

In a word, let all poor ſinners, that have any ſenſe of the ſad eſtate of their ſouls, come from under the

ſhadow

ſhadow of this Bramble, the Devil, unto the ſhadow of Jeſus Chriſt, the true Vine. The Devil writes all his Laws in Blood, as *Draco* did; O but Jeſus Chriſt came meek into the World to ſave ſinners; and he came into his Miniſtery with a beſeeching Spirit to ſinners; and left ſuch a ſpirit in his Miniſters, that were to treat ſinners in his Name, when he was gone to the Father: *As though God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.* 2 Cor. 5. 20. Jeſus Chriſt is the ſinners near Kinſman; he hath took part of fleſh and blood, that he might have the right to redeem them. Poor Conſcience-afflicted ſinners may have gentle uſage of Chriſt; *He will not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoaking flax.* Mark 12. 20. His Laws are not written in the ſinners blood, but in his own. And thus much for the firſt Clauſe of the fifteenth Verſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

Sheweth, what care natural men take in making proviſion for the luſts of the fleſh: with the Application; from the laſt Clauſe of the Fifteenth Verſe,

And he ſent him into his fields to feed Swine.

NOW we come to the ſecond thing in the fifteenth Verſe, *viz.* the Prodigal's imployment; *He ſent him into his field to feed Swine*; a courſe and baſe imployment. He ſent him not into the City to traffick and converſe with men, but to feed Swine, and at laſt to feed with them, as in the next Verſe.

This paſſage of the Parable may the better be underſtood by conſidering the Jews, to whom it was ſpoken, in their great diſ-affection to Swine: Swine were an abomination to them; It was one of their unclean Beaſts. Lev. 11. 7, 10, 11.

And here is the marrow of this Bone: This ſignifies what a monſtrous miſerable man this younger Son

Son became, by leaving his Fathers Houſe to follow his own Luſts; he fell from the Son of a rich Father to be a Swineherd: And

The Scripture ſets forth natural men by Swine for their uncleanneſs and filthy luſts wherein they wallow and bemire themſelves, and prefer before Grace. Matth. 7. 6. 2 Pet. 2. 22.

The Devil poſſeſſed Swine; and thoſe that are of the Devil, and in his power, feed Swine; they feed themſelves with their own luſts. The *Pſalmiſt* ſaith of natural men, *They are altogether become filthy.* And St. *Jude* calls ſome natural men *filthy dreamers*, *v.* 8. The Obſervation we may make from hence is this, Matth. 8. 32. Pſal. 14. 3.

That carnal men make proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfill the luſts thereof. Doctr.

This is implied in that of St. *Paul* to the *Romans*, c. 13. v. 14. *Make no proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfill the luſts thereof*; *i. e.* as carnal and fleſhly men do.

The luſts of the fleſh are the things that ſuch men take moſt care for. *The luſts of the fleſh, the luſts of the eye, and the pride of life*, are by ſome Divines called, *The Worlds Trinity.* 1 John 2. 16.

Natural men are very drudges to their luſts; *Thou art wearied in the greatneſs of thy way*, in purſuing thine own luſts. The ſoul of man, ſince the fall, is chiefly made up of deſires, like a Spunge which is ſtill ſucking in. The moſt vigorous bent of the ſoul lies in this faculty of deſire, which in the fall of man was, and ſtill is in natural men, corrupted into luſts. Iſa. 57. 10.

So

So that it is natural to men to walk after their own lusts, either of pleasure, or profit, or honour: These are the three sorts of lusts that are in the
1 John 2. 16. World, as St. *John* enumerates them. St. *Paul* makes himself an instance in the case, as well as o-
Tit. 3. 3. thers in the state of nature; *We our selves were sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures.* Lust is a natural man's Master; he serveth divers lusts. It's possible that a godly man may be an unwilling slave for a time to a lust,
Rom. 7. 23, 24. but he cannot be a willing servant to it; *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* He may suffer a rape by his lust, but he cannot prostitute himself to them. It is the natural man that indulgeth his lusts; they are his
Prov. 9. 17. & 20. 17. sweetmeats, as *Solomon* saith of stoln waters, and the bread of deceit.

He is fond of his lusts, as *David* was of *Adonijah*, never chides them: It is the very tenor of a
Rom. 13. 14. natural mans life to do his lusts: *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and his lusts ye will do.*
John 8. 44. *They are not estranged from their lusts*, nor can be; *Psal.* 78.
James 1. 14. 30. *Jer.* 13. 23. A natural man is *drawn away of his own lusts*, or enticed: His lusts have the command of the whole man, as the *primum mobile* has of the motion of all the other Spheres.

Sin laps and rolls up it self in sugar to natural
2 Cor. 7. 1. mens lust, though it be filthiness in it self. The
2 Pet. 2. 22. mire and dunghill are filthy and stinking things, and yet it's pleasure to Swine to wallow in it.

Af-

Application.

This ſhews us, That to ſerve ſin and luſts is a baſe ſervice; it is the Devil's drudgery he ſets carnal men about: As ſuch are ſlaves to Satan, who leads them at his pleaſure ſo are they ſlaves to their own luſts, yet willingly ſo; ſo they love to have it. As *Ephraim* walked willingly after the commandment of their idolatrous Princes, ſo carnal men walk willingly after the command of their own luſts, their corrupt and worldly deſires: As they ſaid to *Jeremiah*, *We will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.*

2 Tim. 2. 26. Jer. 5. 31. Hoſ. 5. 11. Jer. 18. 12.

O that men would conſider it, that the ſervice of ſin is a baſe ſervice, it makes men Swineherds. It may be pleaſure to them, as mire is to Swine; but to ſanctified ſouls it's baſe and fulſome: Carnal men are unclean Creatures. As in the Law there were clean and unclean Creatures, ſo are there ſuch under the Goſpel; regenerate and ſpiritual men are the one, and natural carnal men are the other. Spiritual men are ſo aſhamed of the filthineſs and uncleanneſs of their natural ſtate they are got out of, that they loath themſelves at the thoughts of it: But natural men *glory in their ſhame*, *Phil.* 3. 19.

Ezek. 6. 9. c. 16. 63. c. 20. 43. c. 36. 31.

Gen. 1. 26. God made man an honourable Creature, in his Image, and after his Likeneſs: but man hath made Pſal. 49. 12, 20. himſelf like a Beaſt; elſe it would be a ſtrange thing, that men, who are Creatures capable of the higheſt enjoyments, even of glory, and of the God of glory himſelf, ſhould take up with ſo low and baſe things, as any ſinful ſenſual pleaſures. And Pſal. 8. 6. whereas God *put all things under his feet*, he now puts himſelf under foot, under the baſeſt of things, the vileſt luſts. This man does by nature and cuſtome in ſin.

Phil. 3. 19. Some men make their bellies their gods; St. *Paul* ſpeaks of ſuch with tears. *Iſraels* golden Exod. 32. Calf was their god. Some men make themſelves Iſa. 36. gods; as *Sennacherib*, *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and Dan. 11. many more. As it was ſaid to *Judah*, *Jer.* 2. 28. *According to the number of thy Cities, ſo are thy gods, O Judah*; ſo may it be ſaid to a natural, carnal man, according to the number of thy luſts, ſo are thy gods.

And you who are now ſpiritual, you your ſelves were as theſe in your natural ſtate, as the Prodigal was before his converſion; you fed Swine, and fed with them while you were unconverted; Tit. 3. 3. *We our ſelves were ſometimes fooliſh and diſobedient, ſerving divers luſts. Among whom alſo we all had our converſation in times paſt, in the luſts of the fleſh, fulfilling the deſires* Eph. 3. 3. *of the fleſh, and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, as well as others.* There is no difference among men, till effectual Calling make it. Election leaves men equally vile and wretched, till Converſion come and diſtinguiſh. It's true, Election makes a difference

in

in God's purpose, but not in the quality of the persons, till grace doth it. There is no difference in the Clay whilst in the lump, but only in the Potter's intention, and hands afterward.

And so we are all alike in sin, and under wrath, till effectually called by God out of darkness into his marvellous light. 1 Pet. 2. 9.

God suffers his Elect to be born in sin, and live in sinful lusts till the time of their Conversion, and then he makes them visibly to differ from other men: and therefore a judgment of the final state of natural men, even the greatest sinners, cannot be made by their present state; for though they are now in a natural condition, they may be elect vessels, and if so, shall be called to grace in their time. Indeed, such a mans state may be judged what it is at present; but his final estate is a secret.

And for such as are effectually called to grace, you should often look back to what you were by nature; *Such were some of you*, saith St. *Paul* to the converted *Corinthians*, *fornicators*, *idolaters*, &c. And to the believing *Romans*, *Ye were the servants of sin*; and to the *Ephesians*, *We were by nature the children of wrath as well as others.* 1 Cor. 6. 11. Rom. 6. 17. Eph. 2. 3.

And hereupon admire free grace in your change, *that when you were in your blood*, I say, when you were in your blood, *the Lord said unto you live. This my Son was dead, and is alive.* And now you have this priviledge, that you are out of that base service and drudgery to sin and lusts, which carnal men are in. And let this indear the love and free grace of God and Christ to Ezek. 16. 6.

you, and of the Spirit in you, That you can ſay, and ſay truly and feelingly, as he did in the Ninth of *John*, *I was blind, but now I ſee*: I was an unclean Creature, but now am waſhed: I fed Swine, and did feed with them; but now at my Father's Table. Thus much for the fifteenth Verſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

Wherein is ſhewed, That the things of this World, which natural men's hearts, for the ſatisfaction of their lusts, would feed upon, are, in the judgment of our Saviour Christ, no better than Husks and Swines-meat. In what reſpect they are ſo, exemplified in two Particulars; from the firſt part of the Sixteenth Verſe,

> And he would fain have filled his belly with the Husks which the Swine did eat.

I HAVE already repreſented to you

1. The Prodigal's Miſery, from Verſe the fourteenth; *And when he had ſpent all, there aroſe a mighty famine in that Land, and he began to be in want.*

2. The

2. The Course he took for his Relief, from Verse the fifteenth; *And he went and joyned himself to a Citizen of that Countrey; and he sent him into his fields to feed Swine.*

3. I come now, in the last place, to shew the Ineffectualness of that Course in order to his Relief, from the sixteenth Verse; *And he would fain have filled his belly with the Husks which the Swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.*

In the former Verse the Prodigal found imployment in his strait, such as it was, he was *sent into the field to feed Swine*; but yet he got not a subsistance by it. He had work, but no wages; not so much as bread to eat. His work was to feed Swine, and he would have been content to feed with them, if he might have had it. *He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the Swine did eat, but no man gave unto him.*

So that this Verse sets forth the insufficiency and ineffectualness of the Prodigal's course he steer'd to supply and relieve himself in his extream straits. He was content with worse imployment than the *Gibeonites*, who were made *hewers of wood, and drawers of water to all the Congregation of* Israel. This was a worthy service towards the Prodigal's feeding Swine: And their mouldy bread, old garments, and old shoes and clouted, were brave clothes and diet towards the Prodigal's feeding on Swines-meat, the husks that they did eat and feed on, and glad too.

Josh. 9. 5, 21.

Quest. But what were these husks?

Answ. It's plain they were Swines-meat. And these κεράτια, here called husks, as some of the Learned observe, were *Egyptian* figs; a course unwholesome

ſome fruit, not fit for man's meat, but Swines. And *Pliny* ſaith, the rind of them was that which was eaten, and therefore they are called husks. They were a little ſweet, but very hard of concoction, and the juyce very unwholeſome. Yet this Prodigal wiſhed for theſe *Egyptian* figs, theſe husks that were Swines meat, as the *Iſraelites* did for the Leeks, and Garlick, and Onions of *Egypt*; *But no man gave unto him*, (*i.e.*) he could not get enough to fill his belly: He ſtill miſſed of content and ſatisfaction.

For the ſpiritual meaning, it ſhews us, as I before hinted, the ineffectualneſs of this mans courſe, who is the Repreſentative of all natural mens ſeeking relief in Conſcience-ſtraits and troubles, when they come to be convinced ſinners. And the words hold forth four things.

1. That the things of this World, which natural mens hearts would feed on for content, and ſatisfaction of their luſts, are but Husks and Swines meat without God. As Swine in the fifteenth Verſe ſignifie worldly and ſenſual men, that live upon their luſts; ſo theſe Husks, or Swines meat, ſignifie the things of the World, *the luſts of the fleſh, the luſts of the eyes, and the pride of life*, which carnal mens ſouls ſeeks after. 1 John 2. 16.

2. Whereas it is ſaid, that *he would fain have filled his belly with the Husks that the Swine did eat*; it ſhews the property of natural men in Conſcience-ſtraits, *viz.* That they would ſit down with the baſeſt things of this World with eaſe, rather than return to God.

3. When

3. Whereas it's ſaid, *and no man gave him*; it ſhews, that nothing ſhall be able to give a ſinners troubled Conſcience relief and comfort, nothing of this World, when God means to bring him home to himſelf.

4. That the loweſt ſtep of a ſinners miſery is not to ſee and feel himſelf in a ſinful and dangerous ſtate; but to ſee himſelf without remedy, and to find all refuges to fail him. Of theſe in their Order.

Doctr. *That the things of this World, on which a natural man's heart would feed without God, and in which he would ſatisfie himſelf, if he could, are but traſh, or, as here they are called, Husks and Swines meat.*

What the World counted the Apoſtles of Jeſus Chriſt, *filth and refuſe*, 1 *Cor.*4.13. and the *Chaldeans* the Jews in their Captivity, *Lam.* 3.45. *offſcouring and refuſe*: why thus the Holy Ghoſt makes no more of the things of this World, when the heart is ſet on them inſtead of God, but Husks or Swines meat. Look upon the beſt of this World, and it is no better to a ſinner of a troubled Conſcience, being in fear of Gods wrath.

περικαθάρματα and περίψημα ſignifie the filth of filth.

Power, parts, riches, honour, pleaſure, all theſe in conjunction availed not *Haman*, when his ſpirit was perplexed; nor *Ahitophel*, nor *Saul*, nor *Judas*, nor *Cain*, when an evil Spirit vexed them. *Samuel* calls them *vain things that cannot profit, becauſe they are vain.* God calls them ſo, and men who have made trial of them, have found them ſo. Let *Solomon* ſpeak for all; he found all *vanity of vanities*,

Eſth.5.

1 Sam. 12.21.

vanities, yea, and *vexation of ſpirit*; nothing, and worſe than nothing, *Eccleſ.* 1. 2.

And the Devil himſelf thinks them ſo; and therefore he would have given all the Kingdoms of the World, had it been in his power, for one bow of Jeſus his knee. And though he uſe honour, and pleaſure, and ſilver, and gold, as baits to tempt men to ſin, yet he values them not himſelf. Matth. 4.

A Houſe full of ſilver and gold, as *Balaam* ſaid to the Servants of *Balak*, are but trifles to the Devil, ſaving as they are bait and temptation to men to ſin. What is a flie or a worm to a man, but as they are his baits to catch fiſh? Num. 22. 18.

And at laſt the men of this world find the things of this world lighter than vanity, as the Pſalmiſt ſaith of men of high degree; *Riches profit not in the day of wrath.* Neither their ſilver nor their gold *ſhall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath.* Pſal. 62. 9. Prov. 11. 4. Zeph. 1. 18.

And the things of the world, to which men grip'd in Conſcience for ſin, and with fear of wrath, are wont to go for eaſe, are but huſks and traſh in this Caſe, in a double compariſon.

1. In compariſon of the Soul of man. And
2. In compariſon of the Grace of God.

1. In compariſon of the Soul of every man, and that in a double reſpect.

1. As to the great diſproportion between the Soul of man and the things of this world. Man's Soul is of divine extraction; it is the off-ſpring of God; *God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living Soul.* And therefore ſomething Divine muſt ſuſtain the Soul. Acts 17. 28. Gen. 2. 7.

But all the things of this world are of an earthly original, all came out of the Chaos, as man's body did, which was formed of the dust of the ground: So that that which feeds the Body will not feed the Soul. And however the more choice things of the world, as honours, riches, pleasures, make a fair shew, and a goodly appearance; yet it is but to the phansie or sensual faculties: As it was said of King *Agrippa* and *Berenice*, came into the place of Judicature with great pomp; or as it is in the Greek, with great phantasie. Now if the greatest of these outward things cannot satisfie the Soul of man, much less can they satisfie the troubled Conscience of a convinced sinner.

Acts 25.23. μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας.

2. And again it is considerable, That the greatest things of this world, and the greatest share of them, have been, and are bestowed on Reprobates, and such as God hates; as he said of *Esau*, *I hated Esau*; I rejected him, left him to himself, and his own lusts and ways, as he did the Nations or Gentiles in times past; he left *Esau* to be prophane *Esau*.

Mal.1.3. Acts 14.16. Heb.12.

Yet God gave to *Esau* large earthly possessions: *Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.* So he did within an hundred and twenty years, 2 *Kings* 8.20. and so continued for Eight hundred years and above; yet *Esau* was hated of God.

Gen.27.39.

Now things that are given even to Reprobates as their Portion in this life, they can have no relieving and refreshing influence on afflicted Consciences, and poor Souls under the sense of God's wrath. That which gives any ease or true lasting rest to a sinners perplexed Conscience, must be that which can bring

Psal.17.

a

a ſinner near to God, and into his ſaving favour again; and nothing but the blood of Jeſus Chriſt can do this: But now in Chriſt Jeſus, *Ye who were ſometimes far off are made nigh, through the blood of Chriſt.* Eph. 2. 13.

The union of the Body and Soul of a man is by his own blood; but that which unites a man to God again, is the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt.

Though ſtraw and hay nouriſh a Beaſt, yet it will not nouriſh a man, unleſs God give a man the heart of a Beaſt, as he did *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Dan.* 4.

So the things of this world may nouriſh the luſts of worldly men, but they cannot relieve a Soul that hungers and thirſts after the pardon of ſin, and peace of Conſcience; they are altogether uſeleſs to a ſinner in his ſpiritual miſery; they can neither eaſe the pains, nor ſupply the needs of ſuch a Soul. For that pain is from the ſenſe of the diſpleaſure and wrath of God; And what can worldly things do in the aſſwaging of this pain?

If a perplexed ſinner go for eaſe to any thing of this world, he does as *Saul*, when he went to the Witch to reſolve him in his preſent ſtraits; or as *Iſrael*, when in their ſickneſs, they ſent to the *Aſſyrian*; and as *Judah*, when they felt their wound, ſent to King *Jareb*: Theſe could not heal them. 1 Sam. 28. Hoſ. 5. 13.

Queſt. But have not ſome men eaſe in ther gripes of Conſcience by their recourſe to the things of this world? As it may be *Cain* had by building a City; ſo ſome by Dogs, and Hawks, and Horſes, and other ſenſual pleaſures, as *Lewes* Cardinal of *Aquitan*: Some in taking up their minds and thoughts on their riches and grandure in this world, as that man our Saviour ſpake of, who ſaid to his Soul, *Soul,* Gen. 4. 17. Luke 12. 19.

thou haſt much goods laid up for many years, take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry.

Anſw. I anſwer, ſuch men may have ſome eaſe for the preſent, as an aking tooth by the uſe of ſome Medicines, but no Cure. Theſe things may caſt a ſinners Conſcience into a ſleep or ſlumber, as rocking does a Child that cries; I but Conſcience will waken again, and in greater pain. The wrath of God felt in a ſinners Conſcience, is too great a wound for ſo weak a Plaiſter as the world to cure. The things of this world may ſuit well with worldly mens luſts, and evil concupiſcence; as ſome women find pleaſure ſometimes in eating traſh, and children in eating coles and dirt; but it puts them to pain afterwards. As *Eve* did in eating the forbidden fruit; it agreed well with her Luſt, but it did not ſo with her Conſcience. Thoſe things that pleaſe mens Luſts, do after grieve and trouble their Conſciences.

2. The things of this world are but traſh to a troubled Conſcience for ſin, in reſpect of Grace: Its Grace that relieves the Conſcience in trouble; the free Grace of God in Chriſt towards loſt ſinners. O when the wounded ſpirit comes to ſee, that *where* Rom. 5. 20. *ſin abounds, grace doth much more abound*; this is a healing Plaiſter for a ſinners ſore within.

And men may take notice of the vaſt difference betwixt the things of this world and grace, not only towards, but in a man.

1. The beſt things of this world are but of ſhort continuance; *the faſhion of the world paſſeth away:* 1 Cor. 7. 31. But Grace is of an eternal nature, it is glory begun; and Conſcience in man is an immortal faculty, it never dieth. And ſo Conſcience muſt have eaſe and peace

peace by that which is immortal like it ſelf; and the beſt of this world is not ſo.

2. None of the things of this world can evidence God's love to a man, or a man's converſion to God. No man's Election or Calling can be evidenced to him by any thing of this world. The Apoſtle cautions rich men, that they *truſt not in uncertain riches*; ſome render it, *to the unevidence of riches.* They can give no certain evidence of a man's ſtate towards God. When a rich man falls into trouble of Conſcience, his ſilver and gold, and lordſhips, are miſerable Comforters; theſe cannot ſcatter his fears, nor anſwer his doubts, nor give any eaſe to his perplexed Soul. Eccleſ. 9. 1. 1 Tim. 6. 17.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIV.

Containeth the Application of the foregoing Doctrine, in four Uſes.

1. AND Firſt, This may rectifie our opinion of the things of this world; when we ſet them in God's ſtead, they are but Swines meat, and they are ſwiniſh that ſet their hearts upon them, and ſeek happineſs in them. The Pſalmiſt calls himſelf a Beaſt, for his conceit of mens being happy in having this world at will.

Pſal. 73. 22.

Would any of you think a man the richer for having his Garner full of husks or chaff? yet comparatively theſe worldly things are ſuch, they are no more to an afflicted Conſcience, and prove ſo at laſt to all that have confidence in them. And yet how generally are men given over to an injudicous mind in this Caſe?

Rom. 1. 28. εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν.

Yet the ſpiritual man, who alone can give a right judgment of things, 1 *Cor.* 2. 15. he is of *Solomon*'s mind, when returned to his right mind, That whoever ſeeks ſatisfaction in the beſt of this world, ſhall increaſe and multiply his vexation of ſpirit.

Eccleſ. 1. 2.

Worldly men look on worldly things through a magnifying Glaſs, a vitiated phanſie; but a man of another world as well as this, looks on them through the

the Glaſs of God's Word, and his own Experience, and ſo eſcapes an errour in the Caſe. The more ſpiritual a man is, the leſs he'l miſtake in his thoughts of the things of this world.

2. This point is uſeful to rectifie our deſires of the things of this world. We may deſire them, but not luſt after them, as the Children of *Iſrael* did after fleſh. Since the fall of man, man is compoſed and made up much of deſires; his Soul runs out this way in deſire after forbidden fruit; *O that I was made Judge in the Land.* So ſaith the carnal man's Soul, O that I had this, and that, without end. 2 Sam. 15. 4.

And ſince the fall, man's deſires do commonly corrupt into luſt, as *Amnon*'s did to *Tamar.* Natural men are taken with the outward appearance of things, as *Samuel* was with *Eliab*'s goodly perſon, and for that he thought him to be the Lord's anointed. *Eſau* phanſied a meſs of Pottage better than the birth-right. 1 Sam. 16. Gen. 25.

Well therefore ſaid the Apoſtle, *They that are after the fleſh, ſavour the things of the fleſh; and they that are after the ſpirit, the things of the ſpirit.* The honours, profits, and pleaſures of this world reliſh, and go down better with the one; and the love and grace of God, intereſt in Chriſt, pardon and purging away of ſin with the other. *Many ſay, who will ſhew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon me. Whom have I in heaven but thee?* Take what you will of the world from this man, and if you can give him God in the room, he is well. *The Lord is my portion, ſaith my Soul.* But if you can take away God from him, and give him what you will, yet he complains; as he did concerning his Idols, in *Judges* 18. 24. *Ye have taken away* Rom. 8. 5. Pſal. 4. 6. Pſal. 73. 25. Lam. 3. 24.

away my gods; and what is this that ye say unto me? What aileth thee?

3. This discovers the great difference that is between meer natural men, and men that have grace. The one looks at present things; *Demas hath forsaken me, and embraced this present world;* such men are *blind, and see not afar off*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 9. Heaven is a Countrey out of sight to such men; and a world to-come is as uncouth to them as a world in the Moon, and as the Antipodes are to some. But men who have grace look more at things which are not seen, and eternal, 2 *Cor.* 4. 18. They see and enjoy Promises that are afar off. Grace sees as far as glory. And when the men of this world are full of the things of this world, and they empty; these see, and satisfie themselves with some better things that God hath provided for them.

2 Tim. 4. 10.

Pope Zachary condemn'd Virgilius a Bishop, for holding there be Antipodes.

Heb. 11. 13.

Heb. 11. 40.

4. Let the people of God receive the word of Exhortation: Take heed that you degenerate not from the nature and temper of Saints; be not like natural men in your fondness of the things of this world. If God find your hearts going to and fro in the earth, as Satan said of himself, or like the hearts of carnal men; he will rebuke you for it some way or other, as he did *Elias*, when he said to him in the Wilderness, *What doest thou here* Elias? Desires after the things of this world you may have, but gaged and bounded, as the waves of the Sea are.

1 Kings 19. 13.

Take heed your desires corrupt not into lust; and one of your great works, as Christians, is done.

In-

Indeed, if there ſhould be no deſire, a Saints earthly enjoyments would have no ſweet in them; where deſire fails, the ſweet of Creature comfort fails. What is bread to a man that hath no appetite? or drink, if he have not thirſt? Eccleſ. 12.5.

Yet deſire to theſe outward things corrupted into luſt, is worſe than no deſire: So was *Iſrael*'s luſting after fleſh, and *Amnon*'s luſting after *Tamar*, and *Gehazi*'s luſting after a reward at ſuch a ſeaſon as that was wherein he did it. Corrupt deſires will corrupt the things deſired. Thus they ſhall be hurtful to you, as *Saul* was to *Iſrael*, or *Delilah* to *Sampſon*.

If a man have a diſtempered thirſt, the more he drinks, the more his diſtemper grows upon him; though he drink much, it ſatisfies little: the way is to get his preternatural thirſt cured, for it cannot be ſatisfied.

Thus, the ſtronger deſires are after the things of the world, the leſs content there is in them. *The eye is not ſatisfied with ſeeing*; and *he that loveth abundance ſhall not be ſatisfied with increaſe.* Eccleſ. 2.8. & 5.10.

Therefore if you feel a thirſt in your hearts after the things of this world, get the Diſtemper heal'd; never expect to have your thirſt ſatisfied.

Queſt. But how may I cure it?

Anſw. Why, exchange your carnal luſtings into ſpiritual: *Covet earneſtly the beſt things.* The better you taſte the waters that Chriſt gives you, that is the grace and comfort of his ſpirit, the leſs thirſty you will be after the things of this world. 1 Cor. 12.31. John 4.14.

It is one of *Solomon*'s ſayings, *Eccleſ.*10.19. *That money anſwers all things, i.e.* all outward things: and this is as true a ſaying, That the Spirit anſwers all things, all good things. Compare *Matth.*7.11. with *Luke* 11.13. In the firſt place our Lord Jeſus ſaith —— *how much more ſhall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* In the other, *How much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Chriſt makes the holy Spirit to anſwer all good things. And thus much for the firſt Doctrine in the ſixteenth Verſe,

That the things of this world are comparatively but Huſks or Swines meat, when ſeparated from the enjoyment of God himſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

Sheweth, The Property of Natural men, in chuſing to ſit down with any baſe things in the world for eaſe, rather than they will go to God for it. From the ſame part of the ſixteenth Verſe,

> And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the Swine did eat.

THERE is a ſecond Doctrine contained in this firſt part of the ſixteenth Verſe. For, whereas it is ſaid, that *he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the Swine did eat*, this ſhews us, the property of Natural men, when troubled in Conſcience for ſin, is,

That they would ſit down with any baſe things in the world for eaſe, rather than go to God for it. Doctr. 2.

Something of this was ſpoken on the fifteenth Verſe; I ſhall not add much.

When *Cain*'s Conſcience vexed him, he humbled not himſelf to God, but quarell'd with him; *Behold, thou haſt driven me this day from the face of the earth——and every one that findeth me ſhall ſlay me.* And when God put him beſides this fear, in *v.* 15. *Whoſoever ſlayeth* Cain, *vengeance ſhall be taken on him*; yet he applied not himſelf humbly to God, but *went out from the preſence of the Lord*, v. 16. And what went he out for? for reſt: He traverſt the world for it, as that unclean Spirit did; and he ſeats himſelf in the moſt pleaſant place he could find on earth, on the Eaſt of *Eden*. *Eden* was called *The Garden of God*. There *he built a City, and called it after the name of his ſon* Enoch; and all this to charm his vexed ſpirit.

Gen. 4. 14.
Matth. 12.
Gen. 4. 16.
Ezek. 28.

Thus when the evil Spirit was upon *Saul*, he ſought not to God, but for ſweet Muſick; and indeed the requiſiteneſs of the pain puts them upon any thing next for preſent eaſe. The terrours of God on the Conſcience of a ſinner, are worſe than the fits of the ſtone, or any other tormenting Diſeaſe: They are ſparkles of hell fire.

1 Sam. 16. 23.

But yet the main Reaſon, why men in pains of Conſcience for ſin make any diverſions from God for quiet and eaſe, is, becauſe men naturally are unwilling to come to God; they are unacquainted with him, being, as it were, *without God in the world*. They know the world better than God. And

Eph. 2. 12.

Again, their eſtrangedneſs from God makes them afraid of him; as *Adam* when he had ſinned was. As ſtout as many ſinners ſeem to be for a time; yet

Gen. 3. 10.

yet the time will come, that it will be with such sinners as with the sinners of *Zion*, *Isa.* 33. 14. *The sinners of* Zion *are afraid; who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* Kings, and great men, and rich men, and the chief Captains, and the mighty men, will hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the Mountains, and say to them, *fall on us*, *and hide us*—— It is, or shall be with guilty Consciences, as it is with the Devils, who *believe and tremble.* Rev. 6. 15, 16. James 2. 19.

Uses.

1. This shews us what enemies Conscience-smitten sinners are to their own Conversion; they had rather stay in a far Countrey, than return to their Father's House. The Elect themselves, if they might have their own way, would be content to remain in a state of Nature with any peace they could get; the practice of this Prodigal, as the Representative of sinners, shews it

2. Let no man troubled in Conscience for sin, think of getting any peace that will be to any purpose, but what they get from God, and his Word. The grieved Conscience, that has peace any other way, is but as a broken bone ill set, the pains must be repeated in setting again. Your peace is not right, till your trouble send you to God, and his Gospel grace in Christ.

Ob-

Obſerve what the Lord ſaid in *Ephraim*'s Caſe, *Hoſ.* 13. 13. *He is an unwiſe ſon, for he ſhould not have ſtayed long in the place of the breaking forth of children.* Such is the folly of poor convinced ſinners, as to check their repentance towards God, when God is as it were in travail of their new birth. But happy are broken ſinners, when they come to that in *Hoſ.* 14. 3. Aſhur *ſhall not ſave us, we will not ride upon horſes* (*i. e.*) into *Egypt* for help; ——*for in thee, O God, the fatherleſs findeth mercy.* Such poor ſouls City of Refuge is that glorious and gracious Name of God, which he proclaimed before *Moſes*; *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin.* Men and Angels cannot imagine a better courſe for ſinners troubled in Conſcience to take, than to reſolve as thoſe Lepers did; *Why ſit we here till we die? If we ſay, we will enter into the City, the famine is there, and we ſhall die there; if we ſit ſtill here, we die alſo: Now therefore come, and let us fall into the hoſt of the Syrians; if they ſave us alive, we ſhall live, and if they kill us, we ſhall but die.*

Exod. 34. 6.

2 Kings 7. 4.

Why thus do you reaſon, and reſolve when under the apprehenſion of your loſt condition; if we flie to any Refuge but to God, we ſhall die; and if we ſit ſtill in our ſinful ſtate, we ſhall aſſuredly die; Therefore I will go to God, *I'le fall into his hands*, as *David* ſaid in his great ſtrait; if he ſave me, I ſhall live; if not, I ſhall but die. O poor ſinner, venter on God in Chriſt: Thou haſt heard he is a merciful

2 Sam. 24.

merciful God, as *Benhadad's* Captains ſaid to him of the Kings of *Iſrael*; *We have heard that the Kings of* Iſrael *are merciful Kings, let us put ſackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the King of* Iſrael, *peradventure he will ſave thy life.*

Why ſo let the ſelf-convinced and condemned ſinner go with ſuch ſelf-abaſing and ſelf-judging to God, and caſt himſelf upon his mercy and free grace in in Jeſus Chriſt: O reſolve on this way; and ſay as *Eſther*, I will go to God, *and if I periſh, I periſh: Salvation is of the Lord.* So much for the ſecond Doctrine from the firſt part of the ſixteenth Verſe. Pſal. 3. ult. Jonah 2. 9.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

Wherein is obſerved, That when God hath a purpoſe to convert a ſinner, he ſuffers nothing to yield relief and comfort but himſelf. With the Reaſons wherefore he doth thus. And the Uſes we are to make hereof; from the latter part of the ſixteenth Verſe,

And no man gave unto him.

FROM theſe words we may learn,

Doctr. 3. *That when God hath a purpoſe to bring a convinced ſinner to converſion, he will ſtop all ways of relief and comfort but from himſelf: He will diſable all other Refuges.*

So that ſuch a man may traverſe the world over for peace, as *Solomon* did for happineſs, and for certain receive diſappointment. Every Refuge beſides God

God will say as the Sea and the Depth did, *It is not in me. Pass over to* Chittim, *there also shalt thou have no rest.* Sin and Conscience will find out the convinced sinner every where, till Christ hath said to him, as he did to that man, *Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven*; and as he said to that woman, *Thy sins are forgiven, go in peace.* Job 28.14. Isa.23.12. Matth.9.2. Luke 7.

For sinners troubled in Conscience to think they shall find ease and rest in any other Refuge, it is but a cheat upon the Conscience, a present charm. It's like *Sampson*'s sleeping on *Delila*'s lap, a snare and forerunner of mischief to his soul.

It is a sad sign that God intends not such a kindness to a sinner in bringing him home to himself, when he sees him running to Self-refuges, and says, *Let him alone*; as he said of *Ephraim*, Ephraim *is joyned to Idols, let him alone.* Hos.4.17.

O! it's a much better sign, when the Lord hedges up such a sinners way to false Sanctuaries, as he did theirs *Hos.* 2. 6. when God charges all other Sanctuaries but himself not to succour such a sad sinner; help him not, ease him not, supply him not, satisfie him not, this is a mercy to a sinner; and a good sign, when the Lord brings a sinners thoughts of relief into so narrow a compass, as to seek it in himself, and no where else; and makes all other Refuges say to him, as the King of *Israel* did to the woman that cried to him for help in a time of famine; *How should I help thee, if God help thee not?* 2 Kings 6.

When God will save a sinner, he will trouble his Conscience, and let it sting, and the wound bleed, till he indeed draw in his eyes and thoughts to relief by Christ. When a man places a Net in the water to catch fish, or on the land to get fowl, he'l

ſtop all hopes of eſcape: And ſo will God, when he purpoſes to ſave a man; he'l ſtop all inlets of peace and comfort, but what is from himſelf.

Matth.9. It was happy for that diſeaſed woman, that ſhe found no help from any of her Phyſicians; for by this means ſhe became acquainted with Jeſus Chriſt, and was fully cured by him. God will beat a ſinner from every buſh, under which he thinks to ſhelter himſelf on this ſide Chriſt, and Chriſt as offer'd by the Goſpel, when he intends his converſion and ſalvation.

Reaſons of the Doctrine.

*Reaſ.*1. If God did not thus by thoſe he means to ſave his Election would be fruſtrate, and the Scripture Rom.11.7. would fail, which ſaith, *The election hath obtained it.* For the Elect would perſiſt in oppoſition to their Converſion, as well as other men; there is no difference between them and others, till their Calling make it. There is a difference in Gods purpoſe, not in theirs; the Elect are as willing as other men to ſtay in their natural ſtate. As *Lot* was loth to leave Gen.19. *Sodom*, as well as his ſons in law; but God being merciful to him, the Angel brought him forth, that he ſhould not periſh in the City.

John 6.44. No man by nature hath any deſire to a ſtate of grace, but the very Elect reſiſt, till *the Father draw them*; as *Reuben* and *Gad* had no mind to go over *Jordan* into *Canaan*. Therefore when the Spirit does his office in convincing ſuch of ſin, he lets them not find reſt at any Sanctuary on this ſide God himſelf.

If

If a convinced ſinner, a ſinner troubled within, ſhould meet with any eaſe and reſt in other Refuges, he would love theſe more than God. If a wounded man find a weed in the field that gives him eaſe, he'l love that weed more than the beſt and ſweeteſt flowers in a Garden. Men will commend moſt the Medicine that helps their diſtemper, and aſſwages their pain. *Reaſ.* 2.

So that if God did not make a ſinners Refuge bitter to him, as well as his ſins, he would love ſuch things better than God. As the *Iſraelites* ſtraits in the wilderneſs made them like *Egypt* better than *Canaan*, becauſe of the fleſh-pots and onyons, &c. they had there their fill of. And therefore God will break, or empty Ciſterns, that men may have more mind to the Spring.

When God brings the ſinner out of trouble of Conſcience, he does it in ſuch a way, as a man may ſee that he is beholding to God only for quenching the ſparks of Hell in his Conſcience.

Hereby God magnifies his own Free-grace, in that after a ſinners trial elſewhere for eaſe to no purpoſe, he will cure the wound himſelf. God does not do or ſay in the like caſe as men do; as he ſaid in *Terence*, *Cum nemini obtrudi poteſt, itur ad me.* I am thy laſt Refuge; if thou couldeſt have had peace any where elſe, thou hadſt not come to me. *Reaſ.* 3.

But God is free in the caſe, that he may thereby honour his Free-grace; as he ſaid of *Ephraim*, *Iſa.* 57. 17, 18. *I hid me, and was wrath. Ephraim* has a taſte of the wrath of God in his ſoul; and what then, does he humble himſelf to God? No; but *he went on frowardly in the way of his heart*; he ſhirk'd and ſhifted up and down to get off the

trouble, but could not: And what then? did God leave him thus? No; *I have ſeen his ways, and will heal him.* O how greatly does God here commend his Free-grace to ſinners! He uſeth to ſay to poor undone ſinners as he did to *Iſrael, O Iſrael, thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf, but in me is thy help.* There is none other that can ſave thee.

Hoſ. 13. 9, 10.

Reaſ. 4. The Lord doth thus to make ſuch a ſinner, when converted, a way-mark to other conſcience-ſmitten ſinners after him. After *David*'s recovery from his fall by his great ſin, he taught other ſinners the way to God: And experience made *Luther* a Soul-affecting preacher to diſtreſſed Conſciences. When Miniſters ſpeak to ſinners more from bowels than from brains, this is likely to affect and effect moſt.

Pſal. 51. 13.

Application.

1. This informs us, That God hath a ſecret work on the hearts of ſinners, whom he will convert, towards their converſion, while they themſelves are hindering it. When the ſinner labours under convictions, which God intends ſhall be to converſion, God keeps him from deſpair on the one hand, and from preſuming on Self-refuges on the other, that he may neither wilfully refuſe relief, nor lean upon broken Reeds; that he neither periſh on the Rocks or Sands, but flie to God, betake himſelf to the Lord as the only ſufficient Sanctuary: *There is no God beſides me, a juſt God, and a Saviour; look unto me, and be ye ſaved.*

Iſa. 45. 21, 22.

2. This

2. This ſhews, that a man's eſtate is never the worſe liking, when he can ſettle his Conſcience, his unquiet Conſcience, with nothing on this ſide God himſelf, and his Free-grace in Chriſt. Art thou troubled in Conſcience for ſin, and canſt find no ſatisfaction or eaſe, though thou haſt tried twenty ways? why, all this may be; becauſe God intends to do the Cure himſelf, and make thee to know it; that ſo when thy Conſcience is ſettled, thou maieſt ſay as the Pſalmiſt ſaid, *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in mine eyes.* When the man that had an infirmity thirty eight years, could not be healed by the Pool of *Betheſda*, becauſe he could not get in of himſelf, Chriſt himſelf healed him. Pſal. 118. 23. John 5.

That troubled ſinner is in a dangerous condition, whoſe trouble of Conſcience meets with peace on this ſide the Free-grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt; it's a ſign God leaves that man to his deceitful Refuges and Sanctuaries, where he ſculks at preſent from the ſenſe of ſin and wrath: As he did by *Ephraim*, when he took up with Idols, *Let him alone*, ſays God; let him ſee what will come on't. Hoſ. 4. 17.

And on the other hand, if in thy Conſcience-trouble and diſtreſs thou haſt been beaten from buſh to buſh, where thou thoughteſt to have had comfort, but ſtill haſt met with diſappointments, live in ſome hope that God means thee good, that he has in his own thoughts named thee *Ruamah*, *having obtained mercy.* Hoſ. 2. 1.

O let no convinced ſinner think himſelf the better, becauſe he hath company to divert his troubled thoughts, or worldly buſineſs to take up his thoughts, or the thoughts of ſome good thing in him-

himself to please and stroke himself with, or some good purposes to be better hereafter; alas, these are but charms to get a little ease for present: They do but hinder thy thorow humiliation for sin, and thy sinful state, which is previously needful to thy thorow conversion to God.

It were a better sign that all Refuges should fail thee on this side thy looking after God himself for peace with him, and from him.

And if God should not do thus with men, they would never get beyond the first step of humiliation in their sinful state: For so soon as they have a sense of sin, and are afraid of wrath, they begin to look about them for a hedge, or a house, to get from the storm, in hopes it will be over; therefore God disables their shifts, and beats them from one to another, till from all, that when they find no footing on dry ground, they may, like the Dove, fly to the Ark. God allures sinners, whom he will convert and save, into the Wilderness, and *there speaks to their hearts.* Hos.2.14.

When you are brought to this failure of expectations, *We looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, but behold trouble*; Jer.14.19. now you will fall upon plain dealing with your own souls, and with God, and cast your selves upon mercy and Free-grace: So it follows, *Jer.* 14.20. *We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, for we have sinned against thee; do not abhor us for thy Name sake.*

I have been the larger in the Application of this point, because of the errour and mistake of poor souls on both hands: Some in betaking themselves to false Refuges in their gripes of Conscience.

For

For though there were many Cities of Refuge in the Law, yet there is but one in the Goſpel, that is Chriſt, and the Free-grace of God through him.

Others again, diſquieted in Conſcience by, and for ſin, and ſeek, and can find no reſt for their ſouls under Heaven, they think themſelves quite loſt, and that they ſhall periſh for ever; whereas it is a better ſign to them than they are aware of, *viz.* That Chriſt means to bring them from all other Sanctuaries to himſelf; *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.* Matth. 11. 28.

3. This may inform us, What a mercy it is to God's people to be diſappointed in many things their hearts gad after, thinking of content and ſelf-pleaſing in them. God may, and often doth diſappoint them for their good; he knows that if they ſhould have them, and content in them, they would be a ſnare to them, as *Gideon*'s Ephod was to his houſe. Judges 8. 27. When things proſper not in your hands that would draw your hearts off from God, it is a mercy to you.

They ſhall follow after their lovers, but ſhall not overtake them; and by this means they reſolved on a return unto God, and there fixed their hearts. Hoſ. 2. 6, 7.

O look upon it as a kindneſs from God, when he croſſes you thus, as *David* did the reproofs of the Righteous; *Let the righteous ſmite me, and it ſhall be a kindneſs.* Pſal. 141. 5. The Lord did *David* a good turn in taking away his child, though he begged ſo hard for the life of it.

Let us therefore learn to look on't as a kindneſs, when God will not let us be at hearts eaſe in Creature in joy-

injoyments. *Peter* did not wish his own happiness so much as he thought, when he said on Mount *Tabor* to Jesus, *Master, it is good for us to be here.* The Lord's end in giving check to our satisfaction in the Creature things, or persons, or places, may be, that we may seek it in himself, and to bring us to say by proof, *All my springs are in thee.*

Luke 9.33.

Psal.87.ult.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

Sheweth, That the loweſt ſtep of a ſinner's miſery is, to ſee himſelf remedileſs by any carnal means whatſoever: Together with the Application hereof; from the whole ſixteenth Verſe,

> And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the Swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.

I Come now to the fourth and laſt Doctrine from the ſixteenth Verſe,

That when a man feels himſelf in a loſt condition, and withal ſees no way of relief, this is the loweſt ſtep of his miſery to his own ſenſe; yet in Gods method and meaning may be a fair ſtep to mercy in his Converſion. Doctr. 4.

When the Prodigal was in such want, that he would have eaten what men gave to Swine, and none gave unto him, this, to his own apprehension, was the very depth of misery, and yet it proved the inlet of mercy: As the *valley of Achor*, or the valley of trouble, was given by God to *Israel for a door of hope*. Hos. 2. 15. Bare conviction of sin leaves a man as far from God as before, till he be beaten out of all his creeping holes. It's true, the first work of the Spirit in order to Conversion is conviction of sin, that this man is a sinner. I but, saith this man, so are others, so are all men. Therefore the Spirit goes further, and convinces this man that he has no grace, but is in a state of sin. Otherwise, though men be convinced that they are sinners, yet they think they have some grace; and so their opinion of grace keeps out grace. It's a step towards a state of grace, for a man to be thorowly convinced that he has no grace.

A man is never the poorer for casting away counterfeit grace; that which he thought to be grace, but is not. He that wakens out of a rich Dream, and finds it not with him as he dreamed, is never the poorer, because he never had the riches he dreamed of.

Application.

Labour than for a double conviction in order to Conversion; a conviction of sin, and a conviction of the vanity of all Sanctuaries but God himself, against whom men have sinned. Sight and sense of sin

ſin and wrath, will ſend men to a Citizen of a far Countrey, to ſomething of this World for relief; but experience of the unprofitableneſs of this way ſends them to their Father's houſe, where is help in deed.

The more a man is emptied of himſelf, and the Creature, the nearer he is to God. It is darkeſt a little afore day break. When a convinced ſinner is at worſt for relief in his own thoughts, he is fair for it.

Queſt. But are there not ſome ſinners troubled in Conſcience by ſin, that find no releif in the World, and yet look not after it in God; as *Cain* and *Saul*, and the men that were ſcorched with great heat, and yet blaſphemed God? Rev. 16. 9.

Anſw. There is no preparative to a ſinner's Converſion that works further in a ſinner than God leads it on: Converts are *born of the will of God*, and not their own. John 1. 13. The Plow is not the cauſe of the earths bearing fruit, but the Seed that is caſt into it: though there be plowing and harrowing, and the firſt and latter rain; yet there can be no fruit, if there be no ſeed.

It's true, that God ordinarily brings about a ſinners Converſion by preparatives; which although we ſhould ſay they work Phyſically, yet can they go no further than their own nature, as preparatives, and ſo can never finiſh the work.

It was not the water of *Jordan* that cured *Naaman*'s leproſie ſo much as the will of God put forth in it, and the word of God that commanded it. Though the wax be melted, yet it's the owners hand that ſets on the Seal, and makes the impreſſion. A man may be convinced of his ſinful ſtate, and helpleſs 2 Kings 5.

state, and yet not be converted, except the will and power of God work up conviction so far. It was not the whirl-wind, but the powerful voice of God in it, that humbled *Job* to silence and self-abhorrence. And therefore men should give God the glory of the effectual working of all their preparatives to Conversion: *Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give the glory, for thy mercy and for thy truths sake.* When God hath a will to save a sinner, he puts powerful and effectual influences into the preparatives of his Conversion.

Job 38.2.

Psal. 115.1.

Object. But then a convinced and conscience-afflicted sinner is still at an uncertainty for his Conversion; when beaten off of all his Refuges, his Conversion still depends on God's will and power.

Answ. I answer that such a man is not at that uncertainty as before: For first, he is at a certainty for God's power, that that cannot fail him, though all his other helps have fail'd. And secondly, if the turning of the Scales hang upon God's will, his solemn invitations and promises may incourage him as to the will of God in the case; ——*why will ye die, O ye house of Israel?* It's mens own wills, and not God's, that damns them. Though there may be ground of a sinner's despair in himself, yet there is none in God. God hath so set forth himself to a sinner, both as to his power and will, as to leave no cause of despair. God hates and abhors the despair of a sinner more than all his other sins.

Ezek.

The Devil cannot revenge himself more on God, than to bring reproach on him by a sinner's despair; for herein the Devil makes the sinner likest to himself: He is himself a desperate sinner, and he would have other sinners to be so. This is one of the chiefest

sins

ſins that Satan aims at in his temptations to ſin; his tempting to other ſins is to diſpoſe men to this; as wooll hath firſt a tincture of a lighter colour, that it may receive a deeper die.

And let convinced and ſelf-judged ſinners conſider, that deſpair puts them actually under the puniſhment of Hell in part, when as other ſins only bind them over to condemnation; even the greateſt of Goſpel ſins, which is unbelief: *He ſhall convince the world of ſin, becauſe they believe not in me; and he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* He is condemned already, Sentence is paſſed upon him, but it is not executed; but in a ſinner's deſpair, execution is begun. John 16. 9. Mark 16. 16. John 3. 18.

O then let not ſinners in trouble of Conſcience for ſin conſult with reaſon diſorder'd and mated by temptation in the caſe: This reaſon is low of ſtature, like *Zacheus*, and cannot ſee mercy and free grace in the throng and preſs of his ſins; but ſtanding on the Promiſe, as *Zacheus* did on the Tree, on that Promiſe in *Iſa.* 55. 7. or of the like nature, he will be in ſight of hope.

A man may have mighty ſins, but not almighty; but the mercy of God is almighty mercy. The mercy of God is unlimited to thoſe that do not limit it; that is, who ſeek for cleanſing and purging mercy, as well as pardoning. And therefore for ſinners that would be penitent, as well as pardoned ſinners, for ſuch to ſay in their hearts, *Can God forgive my ſins?* is as great a ſin, as it was to *Iſrael* to ſay in their ſtraits, *Can God prepare a table in the wilderneſs?* Amos 5. 12.

Remember and conſider what the Lord ſaith in this caſe, *My thoughts are not your thoughts;* he can pardon abundantly. Iſa. 55. 7.

The

The very holineſs of God inclines him to mercy, as man's wickedneſs inclines him to cruelty: *The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* Prov. 12. 10. The Devil, who is the greateſt of ſinners, is diſpoſed to the greateſt revenge and cruelty: he would revenge himſelf on God if he could; and therefore he belies God to man, as well as he does man to God: As he charged *Job* with hypocriſie to God, ſo he charged God with cruelty to *Job*. *Doeſt thou ſtill retain thy integrity? Curſe God and die.* Job 2. 9. There is no ſuch thing in the Devil, as the leaſt pity towards any ſinner. But God's holineſs diſpoſes him to pity poor ſinners, when their Souls are in trouble for ſin. *Thus ſaith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe Name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one.* Iſa. 57. 15.

The holy God can be righteous in pardoning ſinners, as well as in damning them for ſin; *If we confeſs our ſins, he is juſt and faithful to forgive us our ſins* 1 John 1. 9. —— Oh therefore, if there be any one that the Spirit of God hath convinced of their dangerous and damnable ſtate in ſin, and ſet their Conſciences on the rack by the ſpirit of bondage, and withal beaten them from all falſe refuge, let ſuch come to God, and try him.

Obj. But is it likely that God will harbour ſuch a wretched ſinner as I, who make him my laſt refuge, when all others have failed me, and now I come to him on meer neceſſity?

Anſw. Yes, meer neceſſity may turn a ſinner's eye to God at firſt. At firſt God *compells men to come into the feaſt.* Luke 14. 23. Sinners are conſtrain'd upon neceſſi-

ty

ty to betake themſelves to God for ſanctuary. God allows men to come to him out of ſelf-love at firſt, though after love to God muſt keep them with him. It's well that mens ſenſe of their own miſery will force them to ſeek after mercy in God. The Father will ſuffer thoſe things in a child, which he will not do after. The *Samaritans* believed Jeſus at firſt for the womans words; but after becauſe of his own word. Joh. 4. 39, 41.

That woman which had a bloody Iſſue was driven to Chriſt for healing on neceſſity, for ſhe had ſpent all on the Phyſician, and to no purpoſe; and when all would do nothing, ſhe applied her ſelf to Jeſus Chriſt for cure, and he heals her; and it redounded to his honour, that he could do, and had done that which no other means could do. Matth. 9. 20.

And therefore it is good for poor ſinners in their Soul-ſtraits to look at the power and freeneſs of God's grace, which can and will help them, when other refuges have fail'd them, that they may magnifie God's grace above all.

God's time of giving grace, is when he may have the honour of it: Therefore *he gives grace to the humble*, becauſe he knows the humble will give him the glory of his grace. James 4. 6.

But then, though a ſinner may go to God of pure neceſſity, and ſelf-love at firſt; yet when he is come to God, he muſt and will abide with God in love to God himſelf; he will now ſay, *It is good for me to draw near to God.* Pſal. 73. 28.

And now let the preſuming ſinner live in ſin, and the convinced troubled ſinner deſpair of mercy from God, at their own eternal peril. For the firſt, God will aſſuredly curſe that ſinner, who bleſſeth himſelf in his ſins. Deut. 29. 19, 20.

And

And for the convinced and conscience-pricked sinner, who hath mercy offered him by the Gospel, and yet despairs of mercy from God by Christ, it argues a defect in that sinners humiliation for sin: For it is not so much the greatness of sin, as the greatness of the sinners spirit, that is the cause of his despair. To those Jews who said, *There is no hope, we shall pine away in our sins*, God hath said, *Your words have been stout against me.* Wherein say they: *Ye have said, It is in vain to serve God, and so to seek him.*

Jer. 2. 25. Ezek. 33. 10. Mal. 3. 13, 14.

I may not doubt to say, that there was never any sinner outed of his sins and himself, who missed of mercy, if he sought it of God. Thus much for the sixteenth verse, with which endeth the first part of the Parable.

FINIS.